

# REALISTIC ETHICS

*By*

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*Submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy*

*May, 1933*

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY THE BEACON PRESS, INC., NEW YORK, N. Y.

To  
MY FIRST TEACHER  
JEAN RUBINSTEIN





## FOREWORD

It is difficult adequately to express my gratitude to Professor Herbert W. Schneider for the interest and patience with which he has assisted me in my work on "Realistic Ethics". Our many discussions during which this essay assumed its present form remain among the pleasantest and most stimulating hours of my experience. I gladly take this opportunity of acknowledging a debt that I am glad to owe.

A. T. R.



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## INTRODUCTION

IT IS no accident that less first-rate work has been done in ethics than in any other important philosophical field. For while every rational system must, sooner or later, realize its dependence on a foundation of unproven indemonstrable assumptions, this unsatisfactory a priori element is especially obtrusive in any positive ethics.

The difference is of course, psychological, not logical; yet it is true that in the field of mathematics or logic and in the realm of practical applications there are tests of these first truths which do, actually, convince us. That is, when we see that a thing is reaffirmed by its denial, like the law of identity, or that it is consistently verified by the truth of its predictions, like the postulate of uniformity in nature, we are satisfied as to its truth. But in ethics there is no such acceptable criterion of fundamental truths. We may say: "It is self-evident that intemperance is always wrong," but there is no testing this by the impossibility of its denial—there is nothing meaningless or self-contradictory in the statement "intemperance is right"—and we cannot test the truth of our standard by seeing how it works, for this would necessitate a prior assumption of the value of peace or strength which would again be a matter of faith. Moreover, while we do find a rough general agreement between different civilizations and individuals, there is no ethical dogma which has received so truly universal an acceptance as, let us say, the laws of logic. And, strangely, such unanimity as we do find is directed not toward the fundamental axioms which are the root of any system, but rather toward the specific vir-

tues in which it flowers. Courage, loyalty, unselfishness, temperance, are recommended by most ethical teachings, but the reasons vary from respect for God's will to regard for society's happiness.

It is, therefore, not surprising that by far the best work in ethics has been done by two different classes of philosophers who, each in their way, were interested in dealing with these conclusions or definite ethical codes. The first of these is the group of philosophers who were also poets and whose art makes convincing an individual ethics their logic could never conclusively prove, and the second is the smaller group who, accepting the "standard" virtues, have endeavored to find common elements and classify them under as few headings as possible, explaining their origin, practical justification, logical relationships, etc. But there are few philosophers and fewer students who do not, in unguarded moments, become metaphysical; and there are, therefore, many alternative formulations of the real status of ethics.

One of the oldest and most acceptable of these formulations—loosely described as ethical realism—has in recent years largely fallen into disrepute. And while the pragmatic temper of the age and the dominance of psychological concepts in popular thought adequately explain its loss of prestige it is curious that this loss should coincide with the growing adherence to metaphysical realism. This contradiction leads one to suspect that it is not ethical realism as such, but rather certain realistic ethical systems to which critical condemnation is essentially addressed, and gives rise to the hope that an attempt at rehabilitating realistic ethics may not now be untimely.

The present volume is a very modest beginning of some such attempt. Its first part—ethical pluralism—shows that the monistic bias commonly associated with realism

in ethics is an accidental and not an essential part of such realism and, further, ventures to indicate the outlines of a possible pluralism which would still retain all the characteristics necessary to a system of realistic ethics while avoiding most of the strictures commonly leveled at such systems.

In the second part of this essay we shall be concerned with formulating (and justifying) a description of realistic ethics. We shall there attempt a more or less complete formal definition of the fundamental or necessary characteristics of such a system — the metaphysical status of value, the nature of value-appreciation, the place of value-seeking action, etc. Perhaps we can here anticipate these essentials of our definition by the statement "A realistic theory of value is any theory which holds that good and bad or value and dis-value are indifferent to existence (i. e., that one or both or neither may at any particular time in any particular place characterize existence and that existence as a whole is not necessarily described by either), that they are in some sense objective, and that they are never absolutely inaccessible to human understanding or irrelevant to human appreciation."

This is manifestly a formal description, analogous to the definition of a science as "a deductive system whose premises are general statements descriptive of existing uniformities in nature." Neither of these descriptions tells us anything of the concrete nature or content of our systems. They prescribe a formal structure we must adhere to in erecting a system but offer no hint as to which of the many possible alternatives to select. Systems as different as those of Plato, Spinoza, Russell and Mill all fit with equal facility into this skeleton outline.

Now surely it indicates neither a leaning toward casuistry nor an indifference to pure theory if one feels that

ethics is not adequately discussed in the ingenious abstractions of ethical systems where value and dis-value, good and evil, are current terms and any mention of loyalty, courage, cruelty or greed is resolutely avoided. There is no irreverence in an attempt to utilize this meta-physical framework for a science which will have the temerity to speak of concrete virtues, vices, goods and evils and say something more significant about them than that they are all good because they participate in The Good or even than that their goodness is real and eternal.

In aesthetics where an analogous description of pure theory would be justified we are fortunate in having a large and reasonably self-conscious body of art criticism which, concerning itself but incidentally with the nature of the experience of art or the definition of a work of art, busies itself interestingly and profitably in a discussion of individual works or schools of art, in the assertions of "better" and "worse" which illuminate the implicit concept of good, and in a discussion of the significance of each individual work<sup>1</sup> which gives us some concrete idea of the meaning of significance in aesthetics.

And surely it is not more absurd to ask for ethical discussion which will give us some organized idea of the actual (not merely possible) nature of its subject-matter—which will say, not "If A, then A" but at least "If a triangle, then three-sided" or "If water then H<sub>2</sub>O."

Of course we are not among the first to recognize this need, and many of the greatest figures in the history of philosophy have attempted to erect some such system. Why then have these discussions been so largely fruitless—what has diverted them from a vivid discussion of actualities to an academic discussion of formal possibilities?

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<sup>1</sup> See the philosophic criticism of T. S. Eliot's *Sacred Wood*, Ramon Fernandez's *Messages*, etc.



If we glance at the tremendous number of systems which have been propounded in the field of realistic ethics alone, we find that they are in certain respects very similar. They have each attempted to erect a science of value by equating "good" with some empirically observable quality or measure (such as that of harmony or that of being the product of free will or that of being the satisfaction of the greatest possible number of interests) and then deducing the intrinsic goodness of those things which directly possess this property, the effective goodness of those things which cause or maintain the existence of things possessing it, etc.

These systems are all of them very interesting and, perhaps, none of them completely untrue. But there is one oddity which strikes us as soon as we have examined any considerable number of them. That is that they are all in practical agreement with each other (and with us) in their particular assertions as to what things are good, and that they disagree violently on the postulate of the nature of goodness—i. e., on the answer to the question "What common element or quality do these things possess that makes us call them good?" Surely it is a strange science where the truth of each particular theorem is more apparent (even to its students) than the truth of their logical interrelation.

At this point the objection might be raised that while such a criticism applies fairly enough to most ethical systems there is at least one which is not guilty and which affords us a principal of explanation universal and evident enough to be the foundation of the science of ethics. That is the simple definition of a good as the satisfaction of any interest and the corollary assertion that anything is good in so far as it satisfies an interest, bad in so far as it frustrates or thwarts an interest, and that the goodness of

any particular can be easily enough determined by striking this balance for its especial case. This seems a simple straightforward definition, it involves a minimum of metaphysical assumption or emphasis, and it gains a great plausibility from its recognition of the relevance of interest to value—a relevance which most classical systems seem altogether to have ignored.

But there are a number of objections which arise at the outset of a study of the "science of ethics" as organized on this premise. The first is that no real system can be erected on this postulate without involving further fundamental postulates of equal importance and more difficulty.<sup>1</sup> The second—less logical in nature—is that the criteria of goodness necessitated by such a definition is simply untrue—that many things which may satisfy various interests are in themselves bad and not good—that, in fact, an interest itself may be simply bad. If we consider such an example as a strong interest in cruelty for its own sake we realize that we cannot call its satisfaction a good thing. Even though the victim were so well paid for his sufferings as willingly to undergo them—even if there were no sentient victim but only a dummy well enough simulated to deceive its torturer—we should still say that both this interest and its satisfaction were an ugly, a bad, an insane thing and that they ought not to exist. And what is certainly true of one interest may very likely be true of others.

If we accept the above analysis as, I think, a realistic theory of value is bound to do, we have a twofold problem: first, adequately to account for the relevance of interest to value, and second, adequately to account for the fact that interest alone does not suffice to create posi-

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed analysis of Perry's *General Theory of Value* in part two will, perhaps, justify this somewhat dogmatic assertion.

tive value—that there is some further objective criterion indicated.

We have further an incidental difficulty to explain—why it seems impossible for ethics to be a single science, a unified deductive system. We must also attempt to avoid the fault most frequent in ethical discussions and deal as far as possible with concrete significant subject matter and meaningful particular concepts. Before we attempt, however sketchily, to illustrate such a realistic procedure in the discovery of value, we must attempt a formal and philosophical analysis of the difference between a system of ethics and other scientific systems.

## CHAPTER I

### REALISTIC PLURALISM IN ETHICS

If we glance for a moment at the attempts at a science of ethics we notice immediately that the philosophers who made them did not doubt that they could recognize a good apple or a good dog or a good book or a good deed or even a good man when they saw one. They were not concerned with recognizing "a good this"; they were concerned with isolating and defining its goodness. They wished, primarily, to systematize their judgments so that they would have to assume but one object—the nature of "The Good"—and would be able to deduce all recognitions of particular goods from the knowledge of goodness per se; so that the empirical observation that A is good could be reduced to the rational perception that A is a case of goodness.

This ethical monism has commonly taken one of two directions. It has often taken the harmless, if fruitless, form of an attempt at a real definition of goodness, verified by appeals to examples of good novels, good men, good states and good acorns which had only this one relevant element in common. This attempt has always resulted either in so general and undifferentiated a definition that it ignores all content and is not false only in that it says nothing, or in a more honest declaration that goodness—that which all good things have in common and in virtue of which they are good—is indefin-

able.<sup>1</sup> Such declaration is, however, qualified by the assertion that goodness is easily recognized when pointed at and that it is the recognition of this unique quality inherent in each good object that leads us to call that object good. That is that goodness, like yellow, can not be defined or described since it must be directly "tasted" or seen, that it is essentially the same quality whether it be manifested in a yellow chair, a yellow lemon or yellow curls, and that it is this same unique yellowness we see in each yellow object.

As a matter of fact, however, good is not recognized as directly as yellow is and ethical theorists are driven to give up this innocent attempt at identifying a "sensus" in favor of a far more pernicious attempt at logical integration. That is, they choose some particular goodness—either because it seems to them most apparent or most essential or simply because they happen to be most interested in it—and assume that all other things are good only in so far as they embody this one essential good; or that a good man is good only in so far as he illustrates essential humanity or the good life or the glory of God. This attempt to relate all goods as particular cases to The Good as a universal content—this view that only one value is intrinsically valuable—is a far more dangerous approach than the search for an immediate quality. For in its practical application it not merely ignores but actually negates by far the greater number of possible values, and leaves us so meagre and poverty-stricken a spiritual life that not all its intensity or unity can compensate for the multitudinous joys and beauties it has wilfully exiled.

The particular good ordinarily chosen as end more-

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<sup>1</sup> Hobhouse is a good example of the former, Moore of the latter conclusion.

over—the good of a “moral life”—is one whose values, though indubitably important and necessary, are generally the least exciting and interesting and possess, perhaps, least personal significance for the majority of individuals. A certain large amount of reason, mutual forbearance, kindness, honesty, etc., are no doubt important for life and, indeed, necessary to civilized life. But for this very reason they are assumed by civilized people and seldom (except perhaps in the breach) have enough passionate interest or deep personal significance to serve as an integrating factor for any civilized person.

Nor is there any truth in the defense that only this least common denominator can be of interest to ethics, since all other values are private to each individual. It may be absurd to say that we demand aesthetic appreciation or scientific interest from our neighbor as we demand care for our physical well-being and respect for our rights from him, but it is certainly true that we judge him a poor human being and his life a mean one if he lacks scientific interest *and* aesthetic appreciation *and* significant personal relationships, etc., even though he be the soul of honesty or benevolence. It is not true that the former are a sort of overflow whose presence we appreciate but whose absence we feel no right to condemn. What is perhaps the kernel of truth here is that any one of the former may alternate with any other and it is only the absence of all which we condemn. But although some realization of the moral values is, in most cases, necessary to permit the development of any of the others and the conventional values are not, therefore, so easily interchangeable, our attitude to them is by no means as unique as we hastily assume it to be. We do frequently excuse a bad son because he is a good artist, a bad husband because he is a good reformer, or a bad

king because he is a good philosopher. The comparative reluctance to admit such substitution is simply enough explained by the greater social importance, ease, and physical necessity of imposing respect for the "moral" values. Yet whenever we picture a morally perfect universe we realize immediately that its chief defect lies in the distorted picture it gives of each person in relation to the special values in which he is peculiarly interested from time to time.

But now that we have sketched some of the difficulties and dangers which beset any attempt at organizing a science of ethics we may, not unfairly, be asked "How are we to know values if we neither intuit The Good nor see how particular goods participate in universal goodness?" The question may be understood—as it has frequently been meant—in three senses. In the first it is misleading, in the second it is factitious, and in the third it is so important that we shall devote most of the remainder of our paper to its answer.

If by "knowing values" one means explaining their existence or metaphysical status then we can only answer that ethical monism leaves values, or the fact of value, precisely as inexplicable as before. "Being valuable" is admittedly in many ways a strange quality, but concentrating its mystery in one root value does not at all clarify the situation. It is akin to the monistic attempt to modify the mystery of existence—or reality—by asserting that there is but one primary reality which manifests itself in various ways, or to Descartes' attempt at rendering creation less miraculous by asserting that there was but one miracle and that thereafter the laws of cause and effect (themselves created by it) were permitted to work unhindered.

If by "knowing values" one means recognizing them,

clearly the question is a factitious one for it is obvious that knowledge of the supreme good or of Goodness can only be achieved, even by the monist, in one of two ways. Either the recognition is inductively arrived at by collecting goods and not-goods and applying the method of agreement and difference, (and this of course involves the prior recognition of many goods) or it is immediately intuited and we must then admit that there is no more logical difficulty (and a good deal more empirical evidence in the shape of general agreement, etc.) for the immediate intuition of goods than of The Good. Ethical monism here makes the situation aesthetically more satisfying to contemplate and practically easier to lecture on, but it subtracts nothing from its essential difficulty.

But if by "knowing values" one means understanding them, realizing some of the implications of the assertion "this x is good" and "that x is bad," being able to justify our judgments, or at least being able to check their consistency, having in short a theory of value, then the question becomes one of the greatest significance and challenges us to present, however crudely, incompletely and sketchily, some system or hint of a possible system erected upon the premises of ethical pluralism.<sup>1</sup>

Assuming that the word good is meaningless alone—that there is no "Good," nor even any pure and simple "Goodness," but that there are, or may be, good apples, good chairs, good statues, good institutions and good animals, let us see what beside the tautological concept

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term ethical pluralism (whose implications seem fairly obvious) to distinguish our theory from absolutistic ethics which has traditionally been monistic and from nominalistic ethics which, while a sort of pluralism, admits no ontological or realistic status to value. Our sort of pluralism seems implied by Ross in his article on "The Basis of Objective Judgments in Ethics" and in his book "The Right of the Good." See Chapter VI, p. 128, of this volume.



of "being good" these sorts of goodness have in common. •(Although there is an apparent similarity between this initial procedure and that which we have criticized in the search after a general definition, we are not now proceeding to look for that essential quality which all sorts of goodness have in common and which itself constitutes or explains their goodness, but are accepting them as concrete and separate and are concerned only to find some general description of structure or context which might serve to mark the grounds for our value judgments.)

We find the simplest and most striking objective criteria for "a good x" are borrowed by analogy from that defining a good seed or a good machine.

In a good seed we have a highly complicated physical structure whose complication is relevant to only one of its many possible uses and which is, moreover, unique only in respect of this same one of its many possible uses. That is, although a sunflower seed may be one of many things used to feed canaries, it is the only thing which can become a sunflower and its elaborate internal structure is purposive only in relation to sunflowers, being altogether unnecessary and accidental for the canary. We are therefore justified in asserting that this one particular use is its real function as a seed, and that it is a good seed in so far as it is fitted to accomplish this function. This definition of a good seed is obviously not based upon our purpose but on its own for we may, at the moment of formulating it, be much more interested in food for canaries or in plant chemistry than in future sunflowers.

When we come to define a good machine, an additional element of purposive construction makes our problem even simpler. Here there is not only a certain func-

tion implicit in the physical structure of a machine but this is obviously due to the intention of its maker. We do not therefore hesitate to judge it in teleological terms and to say that a good machine is one which best fulfills the purpose for which it was intended, most efficiently completes the work it was designed to do, etc.

Of course there is often but a dubious distinction between a manufactured and a natural article. Take a grapefruit. We have here something which, by cross-breeding, choice of soil, etc., has been as definitely intended for and improved toward an end as any complicated machine, and obviously it would be a distortion to define a good grapefruit as anything but that grapefruit which manifests the maximum combination of juice, sweetness, size, etc.

As long as we concern ourselves merely with physical objects, whether these be natural or artificial, it seems so easy to define goodness as perfection of type or fulfillment of given function or complete exercise of unique capacity that we are tempted to stop there and say that Aristotle has scored again. But two difficulties appear as soon as we study the implications of this definition. The first, to which we shall return later, is that as soon as we leave this field and discuss either animate beings or abstract ideas, institutions, etc.—that is, when we come to the field of human life which is our primary concern—we find that these simple concepts in their original form are quite inapplicable. The second difficulty is a logical one almost insuperable even within this original field of physical objects.

For when we think of a type as defined by strong similarity of structure we can clearly demand nothing of a good example of a type but the most complete relevant exercise or perfection of that structure. And, if we

discard the unconscious teleological bias of Aristotle's thought, we realize that this position might logically be carried as far as Santayana has carried it, with but one example for any type and the practical result that it is impossible for anything not to fulfill its unique good. And this is of course equivalent to asserting the meaninglessness of all value propositions, as "It is good" (elliptical for "It is a good so-and-so") then becomes redundancy for "It is" (a so-and-so).

That this valueless chaos is the logical outcome of basing value on unique physical structure seems undeniable. For if a healthy animal should procreate because it is constructed to do so, a diseased one should remain sterile for the same reason: if a philosopher should reason or a sane man act purposefully, a sot should become intoxicated and an idiot should follow irrelevant impulses. Nor does the added requirement of "unique capacity" greatly aid us. For obviously many of the most unique capacities possessed by any particular organism are those which would fulfill themselves in the most extraordinary perversions.

And even if we ignore the difficulty we would find in drawing a line to mark the boundaries of each type (and in satisfactorily explaining our choice of those boundaries) and arbitrarily declare that it is nonsense to speak of a good individual and meaningful only to speak of a good example of a type, what reason can our Aristotelian criterion of perfection of type give us for excluding "a good murder," "a good devil" and "a good misfortune" from our list of goods? But if these are not excluded obviously the word good has again lost all ethical meaning and is no longer indicative of a value judgment but only of a factual judgment of completeness.

Suppose, before taking up this question, we glance at

the two requirements we set up for our theory of value. We said in the beginning of this section that a satisfactory realistic theory of value must account both for the relevance of value to interest and for the fact that interest alone is not sufficient to constitute or measure value.

For though there is a germ of truth in the interest theory of value—it is certainly true that one may be interested in any number of things and that only those in which he is interested are, for him, sources of value—yet one must beware of a false conversion which would translate “only” into “all of.” Interest alone cannot create value. The error lies in the assumption that, because the choice of a field of interest is an arbitrary one and because value may be achieved indifferently in any field, that therefore there are no restrictions on the developments within any field which are valuable—that therefore good and bad in an objective sense are not applicable to parts of every field.

An example may serve to clarify this point. Granting that the value of poetry depends on the possibility of interest in it—that if man were utterly unable in any possible world to experience what art critics now call poetry it would be valueless and “good poetry” would be meaningless—yet as matters now stand the fact that many men are interested in Edgar Guest’s verse does not make it good verse, and the fact that far fewer are interested in Keats’ poetry does not make it any less valuable.

We have, in the paragraph before the last, introduced a new and as yet unexplained term—fields of interest or, as we shall prefer to call them, natural fields. Now suppose we try modifying the Aristotelian “complete fulfillment of function” (which, freed of his implicit anthropomorphism, would make a good murderer, a good teacher,

a good avalanche and a good cat all alike good) by changing our focus from species or type to field of interest.

It is of course a commonplace to say that the same object or event may be judged as satisfactory or unsatisfactory in accordance with our varying interests. For example, a man silhouetted against the setting sun as he falls from a black cliff into the sea some 500 feet below may be a very satisfactory picture—that is, aesthetically satisfying—and may, nevertheless, occasion the keenest distress to a humanitarian witness—may, in fact, be most unsatisfactory in relation to our human or social rather than our aesthetic interest. In the same way a medical explanation which is intellectually quite satisfactory may be altogether unsatisfactory judged by our personal interest in the patient whose early death it indicates.

Now suppose we attempt to base our value theory on the existence of different fields of interest, and find goodness in each field to consist in the most complete possible fulfillment of the natural purposes of parts of that field.

There are many difficulties which this beginning would automatically dispose of. For instance, a murder as an event in the field of human relations (and consisting of an action performed in that field) would no longer be a good murder as it might be in a mystery story, but would instead be a bad mode of human relations. Walt Whitman's work as a part of the field of art, would be bad art no matter how many thousands of readers were encouraged and inspired by it as domestic propaganda; and Elinor Wylie's poetry would remain good poetry no matter how many of her readers were thereby persuaded to imitate her in committing suicide.

But the real difficulty is not so much in our attempt to prove that there are autonomous fields of interest and

consequently of value—we have long recognized that principle in the classic triad “The Good, The True and The Beautiful” (although even there the monists have made frequent attempts to prove that Goodness is Moral Beauty, that real Beauty is Truth, etc.)—as in our attempt to justify the specific nature we attribute to our autonomous fields and our apparent arbitrariness in drawing a distinction between these “natural fields” and their subordinate parts.

What is the definition of a natural field of interest—where is the touchstone which leads us to assert, for example, that personal relations is such an independent field and that the vast system of business relations is merely a part of the larger field of human or social relations?

Perhaps a list of examples will aid us to clarify—if not to justify—our classification. The fields of human relations, of art, of science, of relations with or attitudes towards material things—(a good name for this field is yet to be coined), are all what we would call “fields of interest.” They are probably not all the major fields of interest. These must be empirically determined and are, perhaps, added to by each new civilization. There may very well have been a time when the field of aesthetics or of personal relations (as distinguished from human relations) had no significant separate existence.

Each of these natural fields is obviously distinguished from the others in a number of important ways. We may conveniently group these differences under three heads.

The nature of the *interest* which defines or at least delimits them is, of course, one of the most important. The self-fulfilling, passive, timeless, aesthetic interest which is relevant in our appreciation of a symphony is obviously different from the progressive, active, forward-

looking humanitarian interest which leads to a project of rebuilding east side tenements. The eager curiosity, the avid craving for new knowledge (for both new facts and more thorough comprehension of old ones) is obviously a different sort of interest than the conservative "material piety" which makes us so intensely uncomfortable about even harmless waste—which makes us feel, somehow, outraged at any great disproportion between cost or work and gain or result, even though the work be as remote from us as that expended in a tree's growth.

Closely related to this difference in the interest proper to each field is the difference in the sort of *operations* which properly take place in it. The kinds of action necessary to satisfy these different interests are as diverse as the interests themselves. For instance, a dialectical discussion which gets nowhere but merely clarifies and restates concepts is satisfactory and enjoyable when the subject matter is astronomy or literary criticism or even metaphysics. But this same discussion becomes provokingly sterile and most unsatisfactory when we are dealing with unemployment or child labor or the next war.

And, finally, this difference in operations implies a corresponding difference in the *materials* employed and in the nature of the organizations in which they are employed.

Superficially this might very well be considered inconsistent with the illustration beginning this discussion which was explicitly intended to show how a man on horseback falling off a cliff might be treated, indifferently, as a part of the field of art or of the field of human relations. But even here the field as part of which we are considering the event really determines what material we are using. In the one case we employ only the lines,

colors, etc.—the visual material—and in the other we employ our knowledge that this particular arrangement of lines indicates a man—that is, a being which can suffer, which wants to live, which leaves friends and relatives to mourn its death, etc.

Moreover, although it is perhaps true that every event or object may in one or another of its phases properly belong to every field of interest in turn, the above discussion indicates there is some possibility of deciding that certain things are “either always or for the most part” parts of certain natural fields. That is, when practically all of an event or object is material for consideration in one field and very little of it is relevant in another, it is correct to regard it as naturally belonging to the former class and is trivial if not untrue to consider it as a part of the latter. It is only this view which would give us the right to criticize a man for taking an aesthetic interest in the death of another, or for taking a moral interest in a work of art, or for taking an economic interest in science.

This rather inadequate description is almost all of a general nature that we can, at this point, say in defense of our “natural fields.” Such fields are natural because they are determined by interests which are themselves natural and they are realized in so far as the interests determining them are actual. Since all possible kinds of interest have never yet been actualized and there are probably many which are not, at present, even conceived, it is impossible to enumerate the natural fields in which we may find different kinds of value. The detailed analysis of a number of examples chosen from different fields may, however, serve to show more clearly first, how we are able to define or recognize boundaries and, second, how we are enabled to judge that various large and im-



portant organizations are not, in reality, autonomous fields, but only subordinate parts of such fields.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that in the terms we have been using a monistic system of ethics would be impossible for there can be no "natural field" of The Good.<sup>2</sup> The Good is not an identifiable object of interest. We see in The Symposium that although the pursuit of good deeds, good thoughts, etc., carries an empirical meaning in terms of interest any attempt to describe the pursuit of sheer goodness necessitates a shift from interest to logical intuition.

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<sup>1</sup>In Volume I of his Collected Papers we find Peirce concerned with justifying his theory of "natural classes" which, upon further description, turn out to be very much like our natural fields considered from the point of view of knowledge or science rather than that of values or ethics. He says, in part, "All natural classification is then essentially, we may almost say, an attempt to find out the true genesis of the objects classified. But by genesis must be understood, not the efficient action which produces the whole by producing the parts, but the final action which produces the parts because they are needed to make the whole. Genesis is production from ideas. (Paragraph 227, p. 101, 102.)"

"So then, a natural class being a family whose members are the sole offspring and vehicles of one idea, from which they derive their peculiar faculty, to classify by abstract definition is simply a sure way of avoiding a natural classification . . . it should not be by means of definitions that one should seek to find natural classes. When the classes have been found then it is proper to try to define them; and one may even, with great caution and reserve, allow the definitions to lead us to turn back and see whether our classes ought not to have their boundaries differently drawn. After all, boundary lines in some cases can only be artificial although the classes are natural." (Paragraph 222, p. 93.)

<sup>2</sup>There is an alternative possibility that the "natural field" of good is that defined by our interest in interests which are of identifiable objects. But there seems to be no good reason for considering this field as more fundamental or essentially different from any other particular one. See Chapter IV for a fuller treatment of this suggestion.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIELD OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

We may now proceed to discuss somewhat at length a few examples chosen from different fields, and attempt by an analysis of these to show both how the criteria for "a good x" are evolved from a critical understanding of the nature of "an x," and how these criteria further emphasize the natural fields to which they are relevant and in which the x's whose standards they are belong. To begin with we may well choose the field which has received most attention in ethics—the field of human relationships. That is the field in which business and social relationships of varying degrees of importance and intimacy belong, in which such organizations as governments, charities, the Junior League, and trade-unions are active, and in which the duties of benevolence, justice, etc., are not only relevant but, according to moralists, obligatory.

Let us choose one of the more complicated conduct-regulating interests or ideas in this field and examine it to see whether we cannot find within the nature of the thing itself a certain "form" which defines its good, or certain objective requirements of goodness which it must recognize and fulfill. If we choose "manners" as our example we shall have an interesting subject which has, indeed, enjoyed enough and too much of genetic report, but little serious normative analysis.

Obviously our subject requires analysis, for by it men have meant things as dissimilar as table etiquette and the golden rule. We have only to compare two such dicta as Emily Post's

"Courtesy demands a formal call be returned within three days. If cards are left there should be one for each member of the party."

and Tennyson's

"For courtesy is not an idle seeming,  
But the true outward show of noble minds."

to see the need for critical analysis.

No civilized society exists without some conventions, and no two societies have precisely the same set. Nor is it possible intelligently to compare two sets as better and worse when there is no single context to which both may be referred. It is palpably absurd to say that it is better manners to eat with a fork than to eat with chopsticks, to take one's hat off in a church than to take one's shoes off in a mosque, to speak to one's companions at a German table d'hôte than to ignore them at an English one. But although each of these customs is good manners at home, any of them becomes bad manners abroad. No well-bred person would enter a mosque hatless or in any similar way deliberately violate the etiquette of the society in which he happened to find himself. Manners, therefore, must be those generally approved and good manners generally admired, although the particular pattern followed may be arbitrarily or even accidentally dictated by a particular group. Why is this true? Clearly because the more generally accepted are the rules of behavior observed by every member of a society, the less opportunity or occasion for self-consciousness, embarrassment, and friction will there be offered. Not necessarily an interesting or even

pleasurable social life is assured by this rule, but certainly a smooth one.

As soon as we realize that this function is implicit in the nature of manners we realize that we have at least one objective standard by which we may measure any particular mode of behavior. And when we consider the matter we realize that we do constantly condemn the manners of certain whole groups as their pattern for social intercourse does not tend to minimize the amount of disturbance caused by awkward situations. We frequently condemn as unmannerly a society whose rules have not had time to crystallize and which, therefore, permits a large number of minor crises in which people do not know what is the thing to do, make up their individual minds independently, and consequently work at cross purposes. So slight a thing as an encounter in a narrow doorway when there is no rule as to passing right or left will suffice to indicate this need for some rule—this determination, not of an individual's manners by the manners of his particular society, but of manners themselves by the nature of society and social relations.

Having discovered that the minimizing of friction is one of the objectives inherent in manners let us see whether there are not any other parallel requirements which might be discovered to define a good code. If we examine any code of manners at all we are immediately struck by the fact that it has no reference to the relations between individuals but deals only with the relations between members of various classes or well-defined groups including, of course, those between two members of the same class or group.

Manners do not dictate my relations with an intelligent and enthusiastic philosopher whose ideas I may wish to understand, but rather with an acquaintance of my own

age and social standing to whom I am being introduced. Manners do not tell me how to behave to an uncle whom I detest and who has appeared, uninvited and unwelcome, at my door, but rather to an unexpected guest with whom I am quite intimately acquainted. There are, necessarily, serious disadvantages involved in this distinguishing characteristic. What, then, are the advantages which make it worth preserving?

Clearly there is an immense economy of time and energy effected when we have no need to observe each individual we meet to decide whether he is worthy of respect, whether we shall like him, whether he will like us, whether our acquaintance will become more intimate or lapse with time, and so forth, before we know how to greet him, but may instead say "how do you do" and remain courteously non-committal until time has answered some of these questions and shown the balance to be irrelevant.

Beside this conservation of time, energy and attention, there is another equally apparent and much more important reason for the insistence in a code of manners that casual relationships exist between members of classes and not between individuals as such. The individual is thereby enabled to guard his isolation without in any way damaging his ability to co-operate with other individuals in the necessary business of daily life. He is enabled to reduce his emotional entanglements to a deliberately chosen minimum. He is enabled, in effect, to paraphrase and put into practice the famous "I will walk with you, talk with you, buy with you, sell with you, eat with you, work with you, but not live with you nor pray with you."

If we were obliged to express (either truthfully or deceitfully) our personal opinion of every casual acquaint-

tance we should not only spend a great deal of thought formulating it, but we should also involve ourselves in a tremendous number of unnecessary responsibilities. Every expressed disapproval implies some justification which may reasonably be demanded; every expressed liking is legitimate ground for the expectation of future favorable action, of a greater intimacy, etc. And of course such expressions not only betray our own privacy, but also invade the privacy of their object. He is bound to be offended by, or at least to formulate some attitude which will take account of, our expressed dis-esteem; he is bound either to retort in kind to our expressions of affection or to offend us by allowing silence to reveal his unfavorable opinion; he is, in short, forced into a personal relationship for which he may have neither the time nor the taste. Although Barrie's "Inconsiderate Waiter" was designed to satirize the heartlessness of conventional relationships it far more vividly indicates the danger of unconventional ones. Suppose that every waiter and manicurist and doorman and, for the matter of that, every banker and client and customer felt called upon to unbosom himself about his financial burdens, his marital difficulties, his emotional frustrations and his spiritual anxieties. Life would become intolerable. We should all be forced to develop the protective callousness of the harassed settlement worker whose business it is to enter into personal relationships with all his protégés and who, consequently is driven to impersonalize these by forming classes of "people in distress" or "people in a particular sort of distress" and dealing with members of those classes as though he himself were not a person but a member of the class "people whose business it is to help."

It is to safeguard this necessary privacy and isolation

that all codes of manners make it so grave an infringement of courtesy to invite oneself to accompany another, enter his home, share his play, etc. For the failure to give an invitation cannot, except in very special circumstances, be construed as positive disinclination for one's company while the rejection of a proffered companionship must ordinarily be so construed.<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another objective implicit in the nature of a code of manners, but the attainment of this necessarily varies a good deal more with the particular conditions of each society. That is the addition of a certain aesthetic element to daily life—of a certain amount of pleasure which the members of society undoubtedly do derive from the various graceful forms that externalize or symbolize various habitual attitudes. The more formal, gracious and expressive these are, the more will this aesthetic content and pleasure be increased.

But obviously the point at which this formality becomes a burden practically, or at which it makes too difficult the beginning of other social relationships and the consideration of other social needs, is a point to be individually determined by the economic conditions, size, and temperament of each individual society. In adding this criterion to our standards for good manners, therefore, we may say that by the introduction of graceful forms or symbols for our attitudes such as the use of a bow to

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<sup>1</sup> An amusing illustration of this is Lamb's essay upon Proposals where he says that "a young man who should approach the various ladies of his social circle and inform them that they were either not wealthy enough or not attractive enough or not young enough for him to wish to marry them would be a cad and would deserve to be knocked down by any gentleman present, but this is what he virtually and inoffensively does by refraining from making a proposal to any unmarried gentlewoman of his acquaintance." A disregard of this convention not only endangers one's own isolation and independence but also violates that of others.

indicate respect<sup>1</sup> manners can make social life a more deliberate and dignified affair and decrease its embarrassments, but we must add that the good code of manners is the one which most completely does this *without making too difficult the realization of certain other social values* such as a reasonable cost, in time and energy, of human intercourse.

Now this last statement is apparently inconsistent with our view that the standard for a good x must be determined by the nature of an x. Certainly an economy in the amount of energy necessary for social life is a valuable thing, and the organization of society which will accomplish this is, so far, a good organization—but this objective seems altogether irrelevant to the proper function of manners. There seems to be nothing in those functions we have discovered to belong to manners which gives us any right to say that good manners must be economical any more than there is anything in the functions of a biological theory that would give us the right to say that a good biology must be moral. But is this analogy a true one?

Let us imagine (or recall) an instance in which some one's dignity and self-control were so slight—or in which his need was so great—that he violated all the rules of social intercourse and cried out for sympathy by speaking of his poverty—of his awkwardness—of his ignorance—or of any other disadvantage which courtesy would ignore. What do good manners demand in this situation? If we accept our analysis of the function of manners as a complete one and agree that good manners are those which minimize social friction or embarrassment, assist individuals in society to maintain their personal (or spiritual) isolation, and add to the graciousness of daily

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<sup>1</sup>Note the close resemblance between the part played by the ceremonial of manners and that served by ritual in religion.



living, then obviously all good manners demand of us is that we gloss over the situation, that we restore the impersonal surface by making light of the matter, by pretending to understand the cry as an intentional exaggeration, or even by feigning a momentary deafness. In one way or another good manners demand that we do not permit a disturbance to be created by the incident, that we minimize the resultant embarrassment and do our best to preserve or restore the isolation of both its perpetrator and the innocent bystanders.

But now suppose that the offender stands in some personal relation to us. Friendship demands a good deal more. It demands a serious response—it demands help—it demands that sympathy so urgently needed. But—and here the crux of the matter lies—our response may very well show us to be a bad friend without showing us to have bad manners. Good manners are clearly not to be measured by the goodness of the personal relationships into which they enter, and to which they are conducive. The value of good manners is altogether independent of the values of good personal relationships, and a code of manners is not less good because its application would make impossible the realization of a good friendship. Why, then, do we say that the value of good manners, although different, is relevant to the values of other social organizations, and that a code of manners *is* less-good because its application makes impossible the realization of a good economic structure or of leisure?

To explain this distinction we must again refer to our suggestion of "natural fields." Is there not some basis for the view that the sort of organization of which manners is an example is the same sort of organization as that of which a business system, government, etc., are also examples—that all these are organizations of social rela-

tionships and that, while the specific nature of the values which are their particular objectives differ, these values are relevant to each other—that no organization of social relationships is good if it makes impossible the realization of other values *in the same field*?

Is not an integral part of our conception of good manners the fact that they set their own limits? For paradoxical as it may be, we do actually look to good manners to tell us when manners (good or bad) are out of place—when it is vulgar to be mannered.

Nor does this mean only that a man with good manners will know when to observe and when to ignore rules of etiquette. That is, of course, also true. We are impressed as well as amused with the genuinely good manners of the hostess who followed a provincial guest's example by drinking from her finger bowl, but in cases like this there is not even an apparent contradiction. Anyone really well-mannered penetrates the forms of etiquette to their essential objective—the smooth unembarrassed flow of social intercourse—and when this objective seems more completely attainable by disobedience than by obedience to such forms a gentlewoman will not hesitate to disobey.

Once the true function of a code of etiquette is understood it is no longer treated as a set of categorical imperatives, but as the shorthand summary of experience which past players of a game hand down to its amateurs. Ordinarily it is easiest to win a bridge game by bidding in your longest suit, and this is therefore generally considered a rule of the game, but a good bridge player takes it as advice, not as a commandment. There is no contradiction involved in the realization that good manners often transgress the rules a code of manners has laid down in order more completely to attain the end for which those same rules were designed.

But there does seem to be a real contradiction involved in the further statement which we made above that good manners tell us, not only when one way of acting or another will best attain the same objectives, but when these objectives themselves should be ignored.

For instance, it is shockingly bad manners to intrude uninvited upon a social gathering and tell its members something which they have no wish to hear. Yet good taste forbids us, under certain circumstances, to judge a charitable appeal or a socialistic denunciation forced upon a bridge club in terms of the values which manners ordinarily seek to realize. The values of tranquillity, courtesy, and so forth, are no less worth while, but they are, for the time being, impertinent. A starving camp is no place for the graciousness of an elaborate dinner ritual; an hysterical woman on a rapidly sinking ship is hardly the proper object for respectful and distant courtesy. True, not even the best of good manners includes the elements of first-aid or rescue work. But it does tell us when it is an impertinence to seek for guidance in manners and proper to ignore their values in seeking elsewhere.

In short, the significance of good manners is not fully understood when we understand merely the peculiar function of manners. We must, in order to know good manners, realize the complete nature of manners. And the nature of manners will be fully realized only when we realize two things—their particular function and the context in which this function is significant—the context of the natural field of human relations of which they are a part and of whose values the fulfillment of their function is one.

But the moment we step outside any one field the situation is radically altered. We know that, as a matter

of fact, the realization of certain scientific values—let us say the value of learning truth which, in this particular case, is achieved by the demonstration that there can be no omnipotent good God—may make impossible the realization of another value which we name happiness or the feeling of security. But we cannot therefore criticize the theory as a bad theory, for in the field of knowledge the value of happiness is quite irrelevant. We may of course exercise censorship. But this merely means that we have recognized the incompatibility of two values and, in choosing one, have necessarily chosen to forego the other. There is no criticism of organizations achieving either value implied by the choice, but only a statement of our arbitrary preference or dominant interest.

We now see why, even after describing manners in terms of their nature or function, we cannot say that a good code of manners is that which completely fulfills such function. For a too-complete fulfillment may impede the realization of other related values. And in using the term related values we have implicitly recognized the fact that manners is not an autonomous field whose perfection is consistent with a detrimental effect upon human relations in general (as the perfection of a work of art or logic is consistent with a detrimental effect upon human relations) but that it is itself a part of the field of human relations. The criteria for good manners, therefore, not only demand that they achieve the specific goodness relevant to their peculiar nature, but that they also be conducive to—or, at least, consistent with—the goodness of other parts of the same field.

This distinction is of enormous importance to our theory, for only if it can be successfully maintained can our insistence upon the real plurality of values, and our

description of the objective criteria of goodness as something more than perfection of type, be maintained.

Let us, therefore, use a somewhat different illustration further to emphasize the character of a natural field and the *non-autonomous* character of its parts.

Recent critical discussion of modern business has, while using different terms, concerned itself largely with the problem of ethical autonomy. Whether or not we are inclined to accept this claim after an analysis of the nature of business, such an examination will serve to show the tests we must apply in delimiting a "natural field."

Until very lately discussion of the good business man has assumed that a good man would have no differentiated business ethics, but would apply his ordinary ethical concepts in toto to business occupations as he does in any other social relation. To the objection that this does not accurately describe the present state of affairs conventional moralists have the ready retort that that is due to the unfortunate frailty or immorality of business men and that it no more invalidates the correctness of the standard than present day Chicago invalidates the sixth commandment.

This has, of course, been the explicit view of such representative organizations as the Chamber of Commerce, the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, the National Association of Retail Grocers, etc., and is substantially accepted by such more self-conscious organizations as the various Bar and Medical Associations. In the professional ethics formulated by the latter we find an attempt to make explicit the application of the accepted ethical standards of honesty, benevolence, etc., to their especial problems, and a more interesting attempt to make primary the duty owed to other members of one's profession and secondary the duty owed to the rest of man-

kind.<sup>1</sup> Still this distinction, while more conscious and more completely rationalized, does not differ in essentials from that ordinarily drawn between a man's obligations to his relatives or countrymen and his obligations to the outside world.

But the obvious divergence between the conduct of the same men in business and in other social relationships, and the equally obvious impossibility of applying one's personal code to one's business activities and still remaining in business, has forced us to realize that the practice of competitive business is, as a matter of fact, not judged by the codes of other social relations and that it generates its own norms or standards which are not compatible with those of conventional morality.

For no matter what the accepted rules of conduct for one social relation are, we do not dignify them with the name of morality unless they are based on a consciousness of the effect of our actions in other such relationships. Unless there is this imaginative realization of other values and relations no act involving them can be moral.

And of course the entire practice of business is designed to minimize—to cancel, in fact—this consciousness of the full significance of what we are doing. In an intensive sales campaign whose success would force our rival, the Hamilton Realty Corporation, into bankruptcy we, as business men, must feel that to think of Mr. Hamilton is sheer sentimental irrelevance. When we are considering the installation of certain machinery the consequent joblessness of half our employees can only be termed an unfortunate but unavoidable accident.

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<sup>1</sup> This is particularly true of the medical and dental, not the legal, professions. Lawyers have historically been considered officers of the court and in a sense of the government or state, so that their duty to the public is more deliberately emphasized.

We might, of course, consider these things and decide that the social benefits which would result from our success would far outweigh the misfortune of Mr. Hamilton or the misery of a certain number of families. And we might be quite right. But the point is that, as business men, we do not and cannot raise this question. Once we have decided to enter any field of business we find ourselves automatically debarred from considering these irrelevant consequences and increasingly compelled to shut out of our consciousness any realization of the effects of our actions on other human beings—any realization that they do, actually, affect human beings.

Now, whether the results of this attitude are on the whole bad, or whether they are (as Walter Lippman and others optimistically believe) good in the long run, the fact remains that whenever we deliberately ignore the effect of our actions on the whole field of human relations, whenever we refuse to recognize the real implications of what we are doing, we are not acting morally—that is, we are not acting so as to realize values in the natural field of human or social relations.

The recognition of this fact has led recent business apologists to the formulation of a much more sophisticated view which, briefly, asserts that the attempt to judge business by any ordinary ethical standards is based on a fundamental misconception—that in such an attempt we try to impose rules developed in one field upon activities of an altogether different nature and, failing, condemn the activities as unethical instead of realizing that the rules are inapplicable. The correct procedure would be, rather, to discard our bias, to examine the world of modern business without any predisposition in favor of one special kind of value, and to formulate a posteriori business ethics based on the values whose realization we find possible and relevant there.

Undeniably this is a plausible and appealing position. It is consistent with our "pluralistic" procedure, it avoids the assumption of an unchangeable set of values, it enables us to account for the wide divergence between the attitudes of the same men in business and in other social relationships, and, incidentally, it permits us to regain a degree of faith in the possibility of goodness for a society so dominated by competitive business as is ours. A theory which offers all these advantages—and which, moreover, seems so consistent with our emphasis upon the discrete and diverse nature of different values and upon the definition of goodness in terms of the nature of the organization achieving it—is not lightly to be discarded. But neither can we take it for granted that business is an autonomous field without first examining its purposes or functions and deciding whether or not these are truly independent and have independent criteria of goodness quite unrelated to the criteria which define good social or human relations.

If we begin by considering business in its relation to the rest of the field in which it has conventionally been included we see that its nature makes it very difficult to grant the autonomy recent apologists have claimed for it. For we must (with all due regard to the danger of the genetic fallacy in social philosophy) remember that the entire complicated business structure originated in an attempt to satisfy man's interest in his material needs and increased in importance as it became evident that it was also fitted to satisfy his interest in social prestige, power, reputation, engrossing occupation, etc. And this vast organization is still, in spite of its seeming remoteness, directly built upon and concerned with these non-business human values. Its peculiar terms are all symbols for quite elementary human affairs, and while there is no question



as to the peculiarity of their arrangement in business, this is hardly sufficient basis for a claim to autonomous values or independent criteria of goodness.

It is obvious that in speaking of customers, competitors, and so forth we are speaking of symbols, or rather that we have abstracted one particular activity of the people with whom we are dealing and are prepared to act as though this could be dissociated from all others. We can then, upon this false assumption, build up a perfectly consistent ethics of caveat emptor or fair competition to which the frequent or probable cruelty of its application would be quite irrelevant.

Of course, the fact that the objects integrated in one way in one field play quite another part in another field would not, as we have emphasized in the beginning of this paper, in itself be an argument against the autonomy of either. A scientific theory is no less a good hypothesis because the majority of its disciples commit suicide than intense unhappiness is less bad because it has been caused by true belief. But there is an essential difference between the admittedly impossible pure scientist who is neither an animal with physical needs, a human being with emotional needs, nor a rational man with ethical needs, and the apparently analogous concept of the pure buyer or seller. This difference may be expressed by the statement that while the former is correctly termed an abstraction the latter has not even so close a relation to reality.

It is true that no man was ever interested only in knowledge, and in order to form the idea of the pure scientist one must abstract from reality one of the fundamental human interests and imagine a man whose entire conscious life lay in the natural field described by it. But the buyer or seller or competitor—the business man, in short—is not even an abstraction from reality. No such fundamental

interest as the interest in buying or selling exists. The slightest possible reflection on the concepts fundamental to business will show that they themselves are meaningless except in terms of more fundamental concepts borrowed from the field of human or social relations—the field where consumption, happiness, work, security, saving of energy or effort and so forth are indigenous values.

For what are the purposes or functions fundamental to business? Clearly those which we indicate in terms of production, exchange, ownership, etc. No matter how vast and complicated a super structure be built upon them it is only in terms of these that business has an indigenous significance or potential value. And from that it follows that the most pretentious of business systems is good only in so far as it creates or tends to create "good production," "good exchange," etc. Well, what is a good production? or a good exchange? What meaning can we—or do we—attach to those phrases? The answer in the first case does not seem far to seek. Clearly good production must be measured in two ways. It must be measured in terms of efficiency and in terms of what it produces. That is, a good production of food is an efficient production of good food. In other words, no production can be good unless it produces what man wants—unless its value is based on the value of certain satisfactions. For surely we would no more call the rapid and economical production of non-nutritious savorless patent cereals good production than we would give that name to the wasteful and difficult primitive production of good grain.

In a good exchange we have again the same two elements—i. e., efficiency of exchange (or the least possible non-productive cost) and the fact that the exchange gives somebody what he wants—or, better, gives both parties what they want. It is true that the definition of a good

exchange has varied in the history of economics, but in every case that type of exchange was termed good which seemed most likely to give its parties what they wanted—and in each case its failure to effect this result has persuaded economists to alter (somewhat tardily) their definition. For instance, an early criterion for goodness in an exchange—its freedom—was justified by the contention that, in the long run, a free exchange would permit both parties to benefit equally and so would generally mean a maximum combination of “getting what A wants” and “getting what B wants.” When this hypothesis was experimentally disproved the ideal of a “commensurate exchange” replaced it. This is even more directly justified by an appeal to the value of each man’s getting what he wants. Whether or not the assertion implied in this definition of a good exchange—the assertion that a commensurate exchange will give both parties what they want—will be experimentally verified is, of course, still uncertain. It may be that, in order to achieve in any degree this objective, exchange between two parties will have to be replaced with some such expedient as distribution by a third external party. In that case we can see even more clearly how, in being part of an integrated field, the criteria for good exchange are necessarily non-autonomous. That is, just as a good code of manners tells us when not to be mannered (although it cannot tell us, affirmatively, what to do at that juncture) so the analysis of a good exchange may show us when any form of exchange is bad because it fails to achieve its proper purpose, and when, therefore, we must use some other organization in order to realize the same values.

At any rate, in both production and exchange the only criterion not explicitly translatable in “people’s getting what they want” terms is efficiency. And even that is,

first, subordinate to "people's getting what they want"—a good production is an economical way of people's making what they want—and, secondly, it is itself directly explicable in the very similar terms of "people's giving as little as possible of what they want to keep" whether that be energy or material or time.

Since, therefore, these fundamental functions of business are significant only as they tend to realize certain values which belong in the field of human or social relations—for there could be no value to the efficient production of rubbish or its fair exchange for other rubbish—since the type of interest relevant to business transactions is not at all peculiar to them, and since the material used in business is even less peculiar to it, we realize that it is impossible for business to be an autonomous or natural field. In fact, the claim is no more valid than would be a similar claim to independence on the part of, say, bookkeeping.

For bookkeeping, too, takes one characteristic of its material—the capacity that losses, gains, combinations, etc., have of being symbolized by numbers which can be organized in certain ways—and concentrates on the values attainable through these peculiar organizations—the values of neatness, symmetry, precision, expressiveness, etc. And of course a bookkeeper can, by strenuous concentration or by long habit, rule out of his consciousness everything which is implied by these figures except their various potential combinations. Nor is it difficult to conceive that he might finally, like Dickens' famous character, become so exclusively conscious of these combinations and their peculiar values that he would rejoice in a great many transactions bad for his business—or for business in general—because their meaning for him is only an occasion for a beautifully complicated and elaborate exercise in his particular ac-

tivity. But any examination of the nature of this activity would certainly lead to the recognition that its objectives are neither independent nor independently valuable, and that it is meaningless to speak of criteria for good book-keeping which are not based on the more fundamental criteria for good business.

But it may, perhaps, be urged that while any particular part of the field of business (production, exchange, etc.), is largely to be measured by criteria of goodness developed in the field of social organizations and should realize values relevant there, still there are certain criteria of goodness—and certain corresponding values—which are common to all parts of the field of business and these values, being indigenous to that field and characteristic of it, do give it some claim to an independence which such an activity as bookkeeping cannot claim.

Very well then; let us tentatively accept this hypothesis and apply it to see if it is a tenable one. We must first proceed to examine the field of business in a search for its proper good and see what values are inherent there and whether or not these are truly complete and self-justifying.

The first part of our problem is not very difficult. We have already, in another connection, noted that although the criteria for goodness in each of the diverse parts of the field are different they all include efficiency. And both popular and critical opinion seem, further, to agree that the peculiar goodness of business—its independent value—is that of efficiency or economy (with the subsidiary values of organization, etc., thereby implied). And it is true that we immediately realize how, in innumerable instances, we have been far more outraged by a violation of these values in business than by the violation of more generally important humanitarian ones. A recent example is the gesture Henry Ford made in dismantling all ma-

chinery on his farms in order to provide more jobs for the jobless. In spite of the undeniable (if slight) alleviation of distress which it achieved, in spite of the apparent sincerity and generosity which prompted it, in spite of the quite real sympathy with which it was attended (all qualities which make for a good social attitude or situation), the action was a fantastic and distasteful one. It made palpable the distinction between those values indigenous to business and those irrelevant there. The most direct and humiliating form of charity would not have struck so discordant a note as this attempt to achieve in business something antagonistic to its proper objectives.

But what of those objectives? What are the criteria for good business? Can we say, all simply, that the most efficient and best organized system of business is the best one, as we might very well say that the most efficient and best organized factory is the best factory? Perhaps we can, but first we must decide just what is the most efficient system of business. Let us begin by applying that definition of efficiency evolved in judging a single machine or factory and say that that system which enables us to produce the maximum amount with a minimum expenditure of labor and raw material is the most efficient. Clearly that standard of goodness is no more applicable to the present system than is Henry Ford's Christian attitude. For even though we admit that the tremendous non-productive cost of selling (advertising, etc.) is a fault which may be remedied by an increasing monopoly and centralized control in each line, and is therefore not an intrinsic part of the system, yet we must realize that an efficiency which cuts the cost of production to so few labor hours that the larger part of the goods produced cannot be disposed of is only by courtesy so named. Nor, on the other hand, is it more efficient to allow machinery to stand idle,

or to suppress technical improvements which would still further lower the cost of production.

An efficient business system must, therefore, not only have an economical mode of production but must also have some method of distribution where demand would not be artificially limited before it equalled possible supply.

But suppose we have established some system of distribution which will not artificially limit demand, and suppose that productive power continues to increase to the not quite incredible point where—short of deliberate waste—it is impossible for consumption to equal it. What then? If the function of good business is as defined (and amended) the production (and distribution) of goods at as low a cost as possible, there is no reason for calling a halt at any point of the increase. And yet we should hardly admit any goodness to a business system which continued to increase production and either permitted the surplus to remain unused or forced an artificial consumption by laws forbidding a dress to be worn twice, a car to be used over a month, a house to remain unaltered for a year, etc. We should certainly rather approve one which limited production by a fourteen hour—or a seven hour—or a one hour—week.

Clearly then, even if we do discard all previous bias in favor of one special kind of value, and do attempt to judge a business system by criteria evolved from the values found (very imperfectly at present) in the business world, we are forced, finally, to judge a system by a comparison between the non-indigenous values of leisure and of a surplus of material goods. In other words, we are forced to recognize that business is not an autonomous field with independent self-justifying values, and that the criteria for a good business always involve an implicit reference to

the more general social values of comfort, happiness, etc.

Therefore, in spite of our having begun this analysis with the tentative assumption that business was an independent or "natural field" we have been forced, in the course of its development, to deny both the essential unity of business and its claim to autonomy.

Because this discussion of business is important to us only as an example we have dealt merely with those functions which are most familiar—production and exchange—and have considered them, somewhat inaccurately, as together comprising the whole of the institution popularly called business. A more accurate and elaborate analysis would probably treat such terms as industry, trade, ownership, etc., as analogous institutions and reveal a parallel relationship between the institution of industry and the function of production, the institution of trade or commerce and the function of exchange, the institution of ownership and the function of control or security, and so forth. There would, throughout this series of analyses, be precisely the same need to evaluate each institution in terms of the good of its function—i. e., a good industry equals an industry achieving good production—and the same need to consider in our evaluation of an institution its effect on other related functions or objectives.

Incidentally, this recognition that the function of an institution is more fundamental than the institution, and that, if several institutions have one function they are, really, different attempts at realizing the same objective and may be compared as better and worse or even as good and worthless, makes meaningless the idealistic problem of finding the "Idea" or goodness in such "institutions" as poverty.

The fact that business relations are merely a special sort of human or social relations—that business is not



itself an independent field of interest but only a part of one—is made more immediately apparent by this approach to the problem. For in our first analysis we began by assuming that business was a unified, if complex, organism which, completely self-determined and autonomous, naturally gave rise to, and was to be judged by, its own peculiar values. And even from that viewpoint we found that the consistent application of the criteria evolved from the indigenous business objectives of efficiency, economy, etc., was a *reductio ad absurdum* of their claim to independence.

This realization again brings to the fore our initial difficulty in formulating—tersely and definitively—the test for a natural field. Although we have still no more specific line of demarcation to offer than that indicated by the different sort of interest, of organization, and of material, relevant to each field—and the consequent difference in the nature of the values derived from the nature of each—the above discussion may have illustrated how the conception of a natural field differs from that of a particular organization or mode of relationship, and how its values are something other than mere perfection of type.

We may, perhaps, now leave this development of the basic position of the natural field in ethical thought, the necessary consistency of its discrete values, and the relation of its general criteria of goodness to the criteria determining a good *x* (when *x* is one of its parts) and choose another illustration to emphasize the autonomy or complete independence of the several fields and the way in which specific values in a field are truly different, first from the values of other fields (of which they are altogether independent), and secondly, of the other values within the same field with which they must be consistent but which do not at all possess or suffice to explain their peculiar goodnesses.

We may, for this purpose, select an example from some other field than that of social relations with which we have been dealing and which has been almost exclusively the interest of all moralists and most ethical writers. And while there is always, in æsthetics, a danger of becoming technical and a greater danger of pronouncing judgments where the reader has not at hand sufficient data intelligently to assent or dissent, we may succeed in avoiding both these perils if we keep constantly in mind the relation between this illustrative discussion and our main thesis, and use as specific examples only such material as must form a part of every reader's experience.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FIELD OF ART

The field of art, while perfectly analogous to the other fields as far as our purpose is concerned, differs from most of them in several interesting respects. While these differences are simply and adequately explained by the nature of the field they happen to illustrate our earlier theses more emphatically and obviously. For instance, the great variety of purposes or functions, and, consequently, of values, within each autonomous field is emphasized by the diversity of the arts which, using materials as different as colors, stones, words, etc., strive for and achieve different effects through their different techniques and realize quite different (though related) values. Then again, since it is almost impossible for the complete fulfillment of the purpose of one part of the field of art to interfere with such fulfillment in another part—for example, it is highly improbable that the perfection or imperfection of a poem would make impossible or in any way hinder the achievement of an architecturally ideal cathedral as we have seen that the perfection of a code of manners might very well make impossible or seriously hinder a realization of the values of material comfort or companionship—a picture of the field of art shows us more clearly how much the basis for our ideal of integration is a matter of physical necessity or expediency, and how little it derives from any essential value or virtue inherent in such integration.

At the same time the independence of the separate values achieved by various art-forms is sharply limited by

the fact that unless particular forms keep within a certain clearly defined field without violating (even negatively by ignoring them) the values which are proper to that field, we not only refuse to call them good music or good poetry but actually refuse to call them music or poetry at all. This emphatically illustrates our conception of the relations between an independent field and its subordinate parts, in spite of the discrete nature of the values within each field.

This last recognition of the frequently indifferent use of art and good art leads us to a discussion of what is, perhaps, the most interesting and significant difference between the field of art and the other fields of interest which we have been considering. In saying that a succession of musical notes or of rhymed lines which have achieved none of the values proper to them are not bad art but are, as a matter of fact, not art at all, we have been following a generally accepted critical usage. But we have also been making a rather startling statement. For clearly even the worst and most wretched tyranny is a form of government and the clumsiest, most wasteful economic system is, in default of a better, an organization of business. Why then this deviation from generally accepted usage in the case of art? Why has that become a eulogistic as well as a definitive term? Why do we find realized here the Aristotelian tendency to define the class in terms of the good type or norm?

A moment's consideration suffices to show that this is a natural development of our objective pluralistic attitude. It is clear that if a real classification of objects is actually based on the kinds of value which they can properly achieve, a thing which cannot achieve any of the values of a certain field is not, strictly speaking, a part of that field. But if this is true why is the truth recognized only

in art? Is the distinction here due to essential or to accidental differences between one field and another?

It seems that the difference which permits an almost complete identification between art and good art and makes impossible any even approximate identification between human relations and good human relations is an accidental one, and that therefore this tendency to use as synonymous "a so-and-so" and "a good so-and-so" (when so-and-so's are defined in terms of interest or function) is a striking corroboration of our value theory.

The reason that this corroboration is apparently afforded by but few fields seems fairly clear. The function served by a code of morals, for instance, is so necessary to human life that a makeshift must be forced into service where there is no good code of morals—no code, really, good enough to be called a code of morals. But since the purpose of art forms is by no means so necessary to human life, art avails itself of its liberty and is consciously in pursuit, not of works which may be defined in terms of the material used or the technique employed, but rather of good works of the classes so indicated. Artistic creation does not result from the search for an arrangement of lines and colors, but from the search for a good arrangement of lines and colors. The values of any particular form of art are simply ignored until they have been more or less adequately embodied or realized in a specific work. In fact, in many cases the end is not even conceived or appreciated until it has been quite satisfactorily fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This difference may, perhaps, be analogous to the distinction Plato made between those pleasures which, like eating and drinking, presuppose privation, and those like smelling perfume or hearing music which do not. In the former case its very unfulfillment makes us conscious of the unfulfilled purpose, the unachieved value, while in the latter we cannot ordinarily guess at the purpose or imagine the value until we have experienced it. We may feel a general uneasiness or lack which will lead to experimentation and a final creation, but until then we are, at best, groping not aiming.

We find in certain parts of other fields which are less vital to life, though not of course less valuable on that account, that this same identification is approximated. For instance, in our analysis of manners we realized that unless a code had achieved some minimum degree of value we refused to grant that it was a code of manners at all. And of course in science a hypothesis which too inexcusably ignores observed data or the conditions necessary for verification, etc., is seldom admitted to be a scientific hypothesis.

If we, therefore, choose some particular art form—say the novel—and try to discover what criteria determine a good novel, we may also find an illustration of the reflex action by which not only does the nature of the novel determine the criteria for a good novel or a bad novel, but the criteria which limit and describe the class of good novels also determine the definition of the novel as such.

The novel happens to be a particularly good example for our purpose because of its very brief history and because we have at hand and are familiar with all the important novels of the past two hundred and fifty years—that is, all since the genesis of the form. This makes it especially easy to see how, in the gradual emergence of this specific art-form, the criteria for its goodness have been formulated in terms of its particular function or purpose, and how the recognition of it as a separate form and the critical delimitation of the class “the novel” is inextricably bound up with the realization of those criteria.

If we, quite at random, select half a dozen great novelists from the two hundred and fifty years of the novel's history (choosing examples approved by the consensus of both critical and popular opinion) we find, immediately, an extraordinary diversity of types. Jane Austen, Dickens, Tolstoi, Conrad, Proust, Woolf—cer-

tainly neither Wagner nor Rembrandt could differ any more from these artists than they all do from each other.

When from the multiplicity of forms, styles and purposes here illustrated we attempt, inductively, to form a definition of the objective of the novel we are not aided by the dictionary definition that a novel is merely "a fictitious prose tale or narrative of considerable length, in which characters and actions professing to represent those of real life are portrayed in a plot," except that this denotative definition immediately suggests to us border line cases.

For when we attempt to apply this definition we find, first, that it is too wide. Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* and Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* are both "fictitious prose tales or narratives of considerable length in which characters and actions professing to represent those of real life are portrayed in a plot" but they are admittedly neither of them novels, good or bad, but long "short stories." And of course the definition is also too narrow. Where is the plot in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* or the professed representation of real life in Elinor Wylie's *Venetian Glass Nephew*?

What is it that makes us say that, in spite of Dickens' rambling stories, in spite of his execrable prose style (or lack of style), in spite of his appalling sentimentality, in spite of his frequently irrelevant moral apostrophes, *David Copperfield* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are novels (and great novels), while Henry James' carefully written, unified, coherent, and unforgettable *Turn of the Screw* is not a novel at all but an excellent story and Pater's charming idyll *Marius the Epicurean* is beautiful prose—but an essay.

Clearly neither length nor emotional intensity nor literary value serves to admit *Treasure Island* and bar *Ethan*

*Frome.* Let us then return to our six sample novelists and discover what, if anything, they have in common. Different styles, different subject-matter, different attitudes, different interests—their books seem to represent altogether different worlds. And with that phrasing of our difficulty we have, perhaps, stumbled on the key to its solution. These novels do not represent different parts of the world (or, as our dictionary would put it, profess to represent different parts of real life) they actually represent different universes—different Reals in the platonic sense of the word.

In no metaphorical but in a very direct matter-of-fact sense we can say that every novel has implicit in it a philosophy or theory of life and that it is this, fundamentally, which distinguishes the novel from other prose fiction. It is not that different novelists explain life differently. It is that they see a different life. Royce's world is no more different from Santayana's than Proust's is from Austen's, and Thales' world is no more literally composed of water than Woolf's is of personalities or Dickens' is of characters or Conrad's is of forces or Faulkner's is of violence.

Naturally for each novelist as conscious as Conrad or Proust there are many as uncritical as Dickens or (philosophically, not stylistically uncritical) as Jane Austen. They would be as much surprised to learn that they had been writing an interpretation of the nature of life as was le bourgeois gentilhomme to learn he had been speaking prose. But it is no more necessary nor, perhaps, desirable, for all novelists to realize the metaphysical foundations for, and implications of, their work than it is for all articulate men to analyze and define prose.

If we accept, provisionally, this description of the nature of the novel we shall find that its application justi-



fies and explains many of our established but heretofore uncritical judgments.

Take, for instance, our condemnation of the genteel American novels of Howells and our admiration of the genteel English novels of Jane Austen. Of course the latter has stylistic merits which the former lacks—greater versimilitude (or greater ability to inspire belief in her versimilitude), a more concise prose, and so forth. But all that would not suffice to explain our condemnation of the one as trivial, superficial, and synthetic and our agreement that the other (dealing with the same subject matter) is significant, complete, and vital.

This is only explicable when we realize that Jane Austen is not interested in the surfaces of her world but in a world composed entirely of surfaces; that she is not treating real life conventionally but is treating a life really composed of conventions.

In the same way Hardy's use of wildly improbable coincidences to bring about tragedy does not seem to us as jarring and inartistic as does Scott's use of much more probable coincidences to bring about happy endings, just because we realize that Hardy is willing to accept the metaphysical premise of a malignant fate which justifies the conclusion he expresses in the action of his novels, and that Scott is unwilling or unable wholly to accept as a premise the beneficent providence which alone could justify his solutions.

The illustrations one might offer in support of this contention are so numerous that the only difficulty is one of choice. We might take, for example, some such comparison as the one between Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Both are important novels in themselves and in their influence on the future of the form, both are an attempt to make the novel more

directly expressive of the private non-scientific reality of such things as psychological time (contrasted with external time) and inner experiences which never lead to action and are not even retained in memory, and both employ new—in some respects similar—techniques to achieve their object.

Of course the immeasurable superiority of the former novel is to a large extent explained by the fact that Virginia Woolf happens to be saner, a more profound thinker, and a better craftsman. But aside from this individual difference when we examine the two books we find that in *Ulysses* there is the same unfortunate confusion found in lesser stream-of-consciousness novels—(and in such philosophic thought as positivism)—between two orders of reality—the same confused feeling that since we have only the one word real to express both a scientific reality and the reality of ineffective, unpredictable, uncaused essences we must either deny existence to one or assert that they are both real in the same way although one may remain far more important than the other.

This leads the novel to an attitude comparable with that of much idealistic metaphysics—that is a relegation of the actual to the realm of illusion—an assertion that what happens is somehow but a mask for what is. In the world of individuals with which the novel deals this attitude treats acts, thoughts, and conscious, sufficiently-caused, or effective feelings as merely an alter ego for the “real” personality or a deceptive foam on the “real” current of life. Or, if it attempts to preserve the reality of the scientific world—as is generally the case with Joyce—it draws a hopelessly confused and disproportioned picture because of its lack of any standard of conversion or any consciousness of the nature of the relation between

its two "realities." And it is precisely her consciousness of these two co-existing but fundamentally different orders, together with a plausible idea of their inter-relation—or, rather, of their positions in one larger order—which signalizes Virginia Woolf and makes *To the Lighthouse* so coherent and satisfactory an interpretation and so great a novel. Certainly there is an amazing correspondence between the interest, logical coherence (or possibility), probable truth, relevance and emotional significance of the real universe implied by a novel and the rank it holds in critical estimation.

Of course this emphasis upon the specific criteria of goodness, deduced from the specific nature of the novel form and checked by judgments of existing novels, does not lead us to say that a novel which was meritorious in the above respects but crudely written, inadequately developed, lacking in literary structure, etc., would be a good novel. It would not. It would, however promising and interesting, be a poor novel. The novel is not an autonomous field, but a part of the field of literature which is itself a part of the independent field of art. And no novel is a good novel unless it is also good literature and consequently good art. An inartistic novel can no more be a good novel than a good code of manners can be a bad mode of human relationship. But of course a novel can be a bad influence on the young, a hindrance to the social revolution, and an historically impossible narrative without being any the less good on that account.

The above approach to an understanding of the novel is, I believe, a defensible one. But the thesis it illustrates does not depend for its validity on an acceptance of the critical viewpoint here developed. If anyone feels that the novel would be more fruitfully approached through some such alternative hypothesis as "The novel is pri-

marily a study of character" or "The novel is primarily concerned with psychological situations" I should not (in the context of this paper) wish to quarrel with him. I should merely wish to emphasize the fact that, whatever his hypothesis as to the nature of the novel, it will lead him, first to certain determinate criteria of its goodness, second to a true connotative definition of "the novel" (which "real" definition will probably omit some prose narratives I call novels and include some I do not) and, third to test the probable adequacy of his criterion by a comparison of its conclusions with less conscious traditional judgments of novels. If an alternative analysis is as successful in these three respects it will do as well as ours to illustrate the relation between the good of an art form and its peculiar nature.

## CHAPTER IV

### PLURALISM AND VALUE JUDGMENTS

Little further purpose could be served by multiplying instances, for our procedure in the last two chapters has been typical of the realistic approach we would use in attempting to discover the specific criteria of goodness applicable to any particular object. And the fundamental part played by the natural field, taken as an integrated and independent unit for ethical thought, would only be further emphasized if we added an analysis of a good friendship, a good hypothesis, or of any other good *x* to the analyses we have made of good manners, good business, and a good novel.

Let us therefore dispense with further illustration and resume our discussion of the significance and implications of realistic pluralism in ethics with the fuller comprehension which the above instances give us of its concrete application.

To begin with, it is apparent that we have here only a method and no science:—i. e., we have a fairly definite idea of the procedure to be followed in any one case, but we have no useful general definition of goodness, no universal formula by which to predict any particular judgment, and no major premise by which to test it. We are—to put this disadvantage of our method as damningly as possible—forced to rely, in each case, on the correctness of our individual analysis. And this can, unfortu-

nately, only be certified by the concurrence of those who are acquainted with the nature of the thing analyzed and competent in the work of analysis—by the concurrence of expert opinion. The first part of this objection—the fact that we have and can have no useful general formula of goodness, is implied by our view of the discrete nature of values, and whatever practical disadvantages it entails can hardly be cavilled at by those who have, even tentatively, accepted the viewpoint of ethical pluralism. But the latter half introduces a more unsuspected and serious difficulty.

The reliance on "expert opinion" as a guarantee of correct evaluations is, for reasons easy enough to understand, popularly considered the most vulnerable of ethical epistemologies. What is, perhaps, less easy to understand is the indifference with which recent critical opinion has accepted this popular verdict. For any careful reflection or historical survey shows that it is just this reliance on the concurrence—and probable correctness—of expert opinion which has been appealed to to justify every ethical system.

For the great majority of systems all we need do to support this sweeping assertion is to quote the explicit statements of their proponents. Plato's identification of knowledge and virtue, Aristotle's reliance on the ethical wisdom of all "rational men," the medieval appeal to the interpretations of the church fathers, Spinoza's faith in the philosophers' recognition of the sole value of the spiritual life, and Santayana's feeling that people intelligent enough to recognize the completely relative nature of material goods will "ultimately wish to renounce that temporal good which deprives them of spiritual goods in truth infinitely greater and more appealing to the soul—innocence, justice, intelligence"—all re-affirm this reliance

on expert opinion. But it may be objected that, different as these examples are, they are all drawn more or less from the field of authoritarian or of platonic ethics—that the contemporary disrepute of these fields is to be explained precisely by this reliance.

Let us therefore take some radically different type of ethical theory and see whether it avoids making this appeal to justify its assertions. If we choose a utilitarian or interest theory—that is, an ethical system based on the assumption that happiness (or satisfaction) equals goodness and that nothing is good unless it is, or leads to, happiness—we shall not only have an essentially different sort of system, but we shall also have one whose proponents generally lead the attack on the appeal to expert opinion for the recognition of goodness or judgment of values.

We must begin, then, with asking them by what right they make the assumption we have just quoted. The right bestowed by unanimous agreement to it, is the answer. Yes, but the unanimous agreement of what body? Of those consciously interested in ethics? No. All too many books have been written just to assert their authors' disagreement for any claim to such unanimity to be tenable. Well then, what of all the unsophisticated—the "men in the street" unconsciously interested in ethics? Suppose we ask them. We will find a respectable number of assenters and an overwhelming majority of dissenters who feel that goodness consists in doing the will of God or doing one's duty to one's neighbor or obeying the law and that happiness is only an incidental and by no means invariable result of good action. But, the utilitarian protests, you are on the wrong track entirely. It is not to men's rationalizations we must look for our unanimous agreement, but to their response in action—to their true motivations.

Very well, let us look at their actions. And for each one who acts toward happiness we find five who respond—emotionally and overtly—to such concepts as righteousness, holiness, nobility, tradition, etc. But such responses are merely superficial, the argument continues. All that men really want is happiness and they suppose (often mistakenly) that these various things or ways of acting will give it to them. And of course they frequently deceive themselves and come to mistake the habitually pursued means for the true end. But everyone who really understands human nature understands what men are, fundamentally, interested in achieving, and it is this alone which is intrinsically good.

Now we need not quarrel with the proposition that the only thing in which men are interested is the only intrinsic good. It is, in effect, a paraphrase of our original statement that only those things in which men are interested can be good. And we need have still less quarrel with the proposition that everyone who really understands human nature understands what men, fundamentally, are interested in and, therefore, what is intrinsically good. But is not this final statement again an appeal to expert opinion—an assertion that the unanimity of expert opinion testifies to the correctness of the utilitarian assumption?

For, except in this presumption of the universal agreement of the expert, we have found no way to locate the unanimity which is supposed to affirm the axiom of utilitarianism. Neither in the objectives men believe their actions to have, nor in those actions themselves, nor in their emotional responses can we find any such general agreement. If it is to be found it is only to be found in the analyses made by experienced, thoughtful, and intelligent men—men who are by nature and training fitted



to understand their fellows—men who are, in short, experts in the field of human nature. And this appeal to the expert in the field of human nature is made by the utilitarians in spite of the fact that, if such an appeal is ever illegitimate, it is, a fortiori, illegitimate in this field.

For consider the many things which make it peculiarly difficult to resort to experts here. In every other field we have only a comparatively small number of men who are interested—in this everyone is, willy-nilly, more or less interested. In no other field are people forced to make decisions or judgments unless they are sufficiently interested and experienced to know what they are doing. In this field it is often impossible to reserve a decision which inaction presupposes quite as much as does action. In no other field do the majority of participants feel that their nature and training is adequate to form important independent judgments and in no other field do the majority question the existence or superiority of a body of expert opinion, although they do, of course, sometimes differ as to just which opinions are entitled to membership in this body. Even the crudest expression of, "I don't know what's good but I know what I like," shows how much more readily people admit standards of goodness not established by ignorant individual preference in a picture gallery than in a moral discussion. The fact that they frequently also admit a lack of interest in the values of the picture gallery does not affect the question, for those who are interested are the first to admit that their taste must be cultivated to appreciate the good pictures, or to boast that it is so cultivated, thus emphasizing the divergence, actual or possible, between opinion and correct opinion.

We may say, then, that the utilitarians themselves im-

plicitly refer to expert opinion.<sup>1</sup> But in establishing this conclusion the argument seems to have taken a most curious course. For if the utilitarians rely upon expert opinion to prove that happiness is the only criterion for goodness, and if ethical pluralism relies upon expert opinion to find altogether different criteria of goodness in different fields, the necessary fallibility of expert opinion seems painfully and almost ludicrously emphasized.

This discrepancy may, however, be explained by a confusion which the utilitarians were the first to realize as it beset platonic ethics—and the first to fall into when they constructed their own system. Mill pointed out—quite justly—that a man skilled in appreciating Bach might be the veriest tyro when it came to savouring a beefsteak, and that it was no more legitimate to permit him to class musical appreciation as higher than it was to accept the gourmand's—or the glutton's—exaggerated estimate of eating. And that is, in effect, the point developed in the greater part of this paper—the point that it is impossible to find any generally applicable conception of goodness which will enable one to judge values drawn from different fields as better or worse—as more or less good.

We dwelt in our first chapter on the error of the conventional moralists who, being themselves almost exclusively interested in one especial set of objectives, have been competent to judge only the values realized in the pursuit of these and have, consequently, asserted these as

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<sup>1</sup> Their more sophisticated followers do this explicitly as when they assert, "The cause which all men *in their rational moments* agree to serve is, ipso facto, a moral cause." The assumption that all men are sufficiently interested in morality and trained in it to be, at their wisest moments, experts, does not alter the nature of the appeal. For clearly there never is a 100% unanimity and the consistent dissenters must be said never to have a rational moment—never to be experts.

the only real or intrinsic values. But the utilitarians, who were so active in exposing this fallacy, were not themselves free from it. For while happiness is a fundamental value in the field of human or social organization and may very well be, as they claim, the fundamental value there, it is nevertheless completely irrelevant to many fields of human interest<sup>1</sup> and there is not the slightest reason for supposing that all people are really interested only in the values of the one field to which happiness is indigenous, and which happens to be the field of primary interest for the experts in human nature to whom the utilitarians appeal.

But when we are no longer asking our expert to choose for us which values to pursue, and are merely asking that they help us recognize the true values in an already selected field of interest, our request is a far more intelligent and hopeful one. The distinction is analogous to the one between asking a physicist, "Tell me, impartially, what is best to study? In what subject matter *should* I be interested?", and asking him, "What are the primary laws of mechanics, which I have already decided I want to study, and how can I best learn them?" And when we confine our discussion to one field the old argument of the beefsteak versus the sonata quite loses its force. For it is then altogether untrue to say that the man trained and sensitive enough to appreciate a higher is unable fully to appreciate a lower *x* in the same way that the man who appreciates the lower is unable to appreciate the higher. The fact is that a realization—an analysis—of what value it is he appreciates in Matthew Arnold—of what objectives even such poetry as Longfellow's aims at—makes him realize that this objective is far more completely at-

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<sup>1</sup> Except, perhaps, in the accidental sense that most successful functioning happens to be accompanied by a feeling of happiness.

tained in Wordsworth, and the recognition of the goodness of Wordsworth similarly assists him to realize that Shakespeare is far better.

Indeed, if we admit that the criteria for a good *x* depend upon the nature of an *x* it is impossible to hold that the knowledge of values is a matter of intuitive and immediate recognition for the unskilled as well as the skilled. For to put the matter in its simplest terms, suppose a man who was either too insensitive or too untrained to know what a grapefruit was—that is a man who was unable to eat fruit or who happened never to have heard or seen anything of this particular fruit. If he were suddenly presented with a crate of assorted grapefruits and asked to evaluate them he might very well take them as a species of ball or as a species of table ornament and grade them entirely in terms of their hardness and size or of their color and shape. Now considered as balls it is quite true that the smallest and hardest grapefruit would be the best. But even if we admitted that this evaluation was correct for his purposes we would in the same breath assert that his purposes were quite indifferent to a correct evaluation of a grapefruit—that he was incompetent to recognize a good grapefruit because he did not know the nature or the purposes of a grapefruit. In the same way we may grant that a man who is altogether uninterested in literature and is possessed by a desire for the social revolution is choosing wisely, for his purposes, in publishing only novels rich in propaganda, but we would continue to say he may be mistaken in calling these good novels.

In short, if we are to derive goodness from the nature of a thing it seems clear that no one who does not understand an *x* is competent to recognize a good *x*, and the limitations of any one person's time and powers of atten-

tion—together with the fact that concentrated attention to one sort of sensibility generally hinders the development of interest in other sorts—makes it unlikely that there will be many people equally competent to recognize goodness in a number of diverse fields. We ought to be as reluctant to ask a humanitarian to give us a complete catalogue of values as we would be to demand of an art critic the criteria for a good family relationship or a good experiment. It is humanly difficult to be an expert in moral values; it is theoretically impossible to be an expert in goodness.

We should, perhaps, make one concession to the conventional belief in the dominant and superior position which both moralists and utilitarians attribute to the values aimed at in the field of human relations. We have touched on the matter earlier but we must qualify the somewhat dogmatic tenor of our objections before leaving the subject. This concession does not consist in admitting any essential priority to such values. For while they are prior in a sense, it is in the sense of physical and temporal, not of logical, priority. That is to say, a reasonable amount of such social values as security and comfort, is necessary before there is much opportunity for the development of art, of knowledge, of significant personal relations, etc. But, as Hartmann suggests, if there were any hierarchy to be constructed upon this fact it might, more logically, proceed on the assumption that the posterior and rarer values were the most important since they presupposed at least a minimum degree of the others.<sup>1</sup> And of course this "necessary ground" relationship is

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<sup>1</sup> This is only suggested in opposition to the frequent assertion of higher rank for the other values but is not intended to imply that the appreciation of a comfortable chair because it makes possible a good essay is any less grave a misunderstanding than the appreciation of music as an aid to digestion.

only true in the most general and social terms. There has been no lack of particular achievement of the posterior values by people who have never been fortunate enough to realize the prior ones.

There is, however, another more significant difference between this field and the others. Fully to understand this we must concentrate on negative rather than on positive values. It is necessary here to turn for a moment to a consideration of the very simple terminology which has been employed throughout the last four chapters. While we have made no attempt at the creation and definition of new ethical terms we have attempted to apply consistently the popular distinction which would refer goodness to an object and value to its relation with an experiencing organism. That is, in the terms we have employed a good dinner is one which is nourishing, tastily prepared, appetizingly served, etc., but a good dinner is only potentially valuable until it is eaten. To put it briefly, value is found in the experience of a good. No good is valuable until it is experienced. If we speak of a good as being valuable before it is experienced we mean potentially valuable. It is this view which leads us to say that nothing which is not an (at least possible) object of interest can achieve value, since it is meaningless to speak of an experience which does not involve the interest—sometimes, of course, the unconscious interest—of the experiencing organism.

Now in most fields no matter how far from goodness any particular thing may be its shortcomings merely rob us of a possible value. They do not force a dis-value upon us. If a lurid chromo hangs upon the wall we are robbed of the possible value of appreciating a Titian there, but we need only turn our eyes away from the chromo to render harmless its badness—to make it, at worst, merely

a potential dis-value. But when we come to the badness of a social situation which consists in suffering rather than in ugliness, the case is altered. No matter how completely we concentrate on the other side of the street the badness is being experienced by the sufferer—unhappiness is an actual, not a potential, dis-value. It is this implication of a sentience other than our own which leads us to feel that badness in the field of social relations is a positive evil which we must change by active reform, whereas in other fields we can always neutralize its effects by indifference. And since any effective action implies a considerable degree of interest it is largely this same view which forces us to admit that, while interest in every other field is optional, here alone it may be to some extent obligatory.

There is one further point which we should consider here. Can there be an evaluation of interests in terms of ethical pluralism? In traditional ethics it is, of course, primarily interests which are evaluated. Perry, speaking for the modern utilitarians or proponents of the interest theory, summarizes the opposite attitude when he carefully and at some length considers the question and decides that it is impossible to speak of a bad or mistaken interest in terms of his system. Where must ethical pluralism stand?

We must begin, I think, by drawing a distinction between interests, which are more or less general, and the specific objects which satisfy them. As Peirce says in his discussion of generality, "An interest is always general; that is, it is always some *kind* of thing or event in which one is interested; at least, until the element of will, which is always exercised upon an individual object upon an individual occasion, becomes so predominant as to overrule the generalizing character of interest. Thus interests create classes, and extremely broad classes. But objects

of interests become, in the pursuit of them, more specific."

Now we began by saying that these general classes—which we have termed natural fields—are distinguished from each other not only by the kinds of interests but also by the kinds of organizations and materials relevant to each. Although this distinction is an empirical one and sometimes the recognition of one of these peculiarities, sometimes the recognition of another, is most convenient or apparent, still the fields are, as Peirce points out, primarily distinguished from each other by the different interests directed to each.

But when we more closely examined these natural fields we found that there was an even more fundamental—if not quite so apparent—way of defining them. We found that, although the criteria of goodness of a thing was determined by its nature—that is, by the field to which it belonged and the peculiar part it played there—its nature was reciprocally determined by its criteria of goodness. For we realized that when an organization of rhymed lines or colors or musical notes became sufficiently bad we no longer said, "That is poor music," but rather, "That is not music." Similarly a sufficiently clumsy organization of social conventions or use of etiquette might be called mannerless rather than bad manners.<sup>1</sup>

Fundamentally, then, the nature of a field is determined by the values whose realization is possible there, and its boundaries are marked by the points at which organizations apparently belonging to it can no longer in any degree satisfy its peculiar criteria of goodness.

Now if we combine this idea that our judgment of a good *x* defines our conception of the class of *x* (which, of course, includes many bad *x*'s) with the fact that interest is never initially or essentially directed toward any

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 47-50, Chapter III.



particular  $x$  but only to "an  $x$ " unspecified (that is, only to a member of the class  $x$ ) we may, I think, conclude that any two interests directed to the same class may be judged as better and worse as they are satisfied by better or worse members of it. That is, if we let  $x$  equal knowledge and  $y$  equal aesthetic appreciation we can not compare an interest in  $x$  and an interest in  $y$  as better and worse any more than we can compare  $x$  and  $y$  as better and worse. It is only human preference and not a value judgment which can rank  $x$  higher than  $y$  or declare, "I would rather have beauty than truth." But if  $x'$  equals "knowledge carefully limited so as not to destroy certain illusions" and  $x''$  equals "knowledge unlimited" we are not only justified in saying that  $x''$  is a better  $x$  than  $x'$  (and, according to our definitions, therefore, that  $x''$  is better than  $x'$ ) but we are also justified in saying that an interest in knowledge is better directed to or satisfied by  $x''$  than by  $x'$ . We have no right to say a man should be interested in music but we have a right to say that if a man is really interested in music—if his interest in music is a good interest in music—he will be satisfied by Mendelssohn's Spring Song rather than by The Maiden's Prayer.

And if we think back to the general outline of our theory we see that this possibility of evaluating interests as well as those things which may or may not satisfy them is involved in our very first assumption. For if value is the experience of a good, and if experience implies a conscious or unconscious interest, then it follows that only those interests are good which, when satisfied, achieve value. That is, there is no such thing as a good interest per se. But a good interest in  $x$  is an interest in a good  $x$ . The illustration we used in our first chapter of a bad interest—an interest in cruelty for its own sake—is bad

precisely because it is an interest in the field of social relations which can only be satisfied by a bad social relation. Just as no organization can be good unless it is consistent with and conducive to the general values relevant to its natural field, so a good interest must be an interest in the good of that field to which it is directed.<sup>1</sup>

We have now, I think, developed the logical outline of ethical pluralism and have, more or less sketchily, completed its elementary argument; but there are one or two topics so universally considered a part of any ethical discussion that their omission seems to indicate some heretical stand on the matter. We must therefore mention, as briefly as may be, the implications our theory has in these directions.

The first is the interpretation it would give to the term a good life or a good man. No one need quarrel with the description of a good life as a value-full life and a good man as a man who lives a value-full life.<sup>2</sup> But before giving these terms any greater significance an ethical pluralist must consider what relation "man" and "life" bear to the various natural fields in which the meaning of goodness is developed. Are the organizations referred to by these terms themselves natural fields? They may very well be so in the context of certain specific philosophies or theologies. But certainly they need not be so and except in some such context the description is one we have no right and no reason to assume. Are they, then,

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<sup>1</sup> We might therefore formulate an alternative definition of value and say that value equals either the experience of a good *x* or the satisfaction of a good interest. Our earlier definition would remain the more fundamental, however, since a good interest must be defined as the interest in a good *x*.

<sup>2</sup> This rather awkward substitute for valuable is necessary because the latter term has the accepted connotation of being valuable for some end or to some one.

as is more frequently supposed, a sort of super-field including and composed of all the others?

This view seems far more acceptable as it necessitates no prior assumption of the nature—or even of the existence—of a particular purpose inherent in man or in life. But upon examination there seems to be no better reason for assuming that a good life is independently judged by the diversity and balance of the values achieved in it or that it is measured independently by its inclusiveness rather than derivatively by the amount of value realized by the man who lives it.

An existence of a certain duration seems to have no essential value but to provide an opportunity for realizing great values. A good life is merely one which has included the experience of many goods and in which the opportunities for value have been fully realized.

It does not seem to matter theoretically whether or not it is an integrated life—that is, whether the values achieved have belonged more or less to the same fields or to widely different ones—unless the disintegration has been so extreme that energy and time which might otherwise have been spent in achieving values have been wasted in making transitions.

Nor, as a corollary, does it seem that a man is any the better for being balanced—that is, for having some interest in a number of fields and realizing some value in each rather than concentrating on one field and writing *To A Nightingale* or abolishing the debtors' prisons.

In fact, most people do prefer achieving a minimum degree of the values of at least two or three fields—but this is a matter of taste, not judgment. And most people must, perforce, be somewhat interested in the field of social relations. But this is, again, not a matter of judgment but rather a matter of necessity. There is, in short,

no meaning to ethical judgment—to the use of better and worse—except within the context of a single natural field. And so ethical pluralism will conclude that it is safest to say the terms “a good life” or “good man” are denotatively used to refer to the combination or organization of a number of fields, but do not actually signify an independent integrated “field of fields.”

Finally we must recall a point which needs no explanation but does, perhaps, call for some emphasis. That is that this diversity and essential difference in the various goods makes it inevitable that many values should be genuinely irreconcilable with many others, and that the true ethical conflict is not as often between good and bad or between value and dis-value as between two opposed and equally real goods or possible values.

Before proceeding with the second part of our task we may well turn back and summarize the propositions which have been formulated and developed during the course of the last five chapters as fundamental and peculiar to ethical pluralism.

1. Goods are diverse and not reducible to any one common denominator.
  - a. Strictly speaking there is no “good” but only a “good x” the “goodness” of which may not at all resemble that of a good y.
2. A criterion of goodness must be derived from the nature of the thing to which it is applied.
  - a. The nature of a thing is determined by the natural field to which it belongs and the particular function it has to perform there.
3. The goodness or potential value of a thing is not immediately recognized (like a simple quality) but is understood through analysis (like a structure).
  - a. The consensus of expert opinion in a given

- field is therefore the only possible certificate for correct ethical judgment.
- b. But expertness in goodness per se is impossible.
4. Ethical judgment—the significant use of better and worse—is possible only in the context of one natural field.
    - a. The choice of a field must (ethically considered) be arbitrary, but interests as well as the objects to which they are directed may be evaluated within the context of any single field.
  5. Goods drawn from different fields are altogether independent and may often be incompatible. A good x is no less good because it makes impossible a good y if x and y are drawn from different fields.
    - a. The problem of integration outside any single field is a practical, not a theoretical one.
    - b. "Man" or "life" are specious fields.





## CHAPTER V

### HUMAN INTERESTS AND RATIONAL VALUES

It is easy enough to show how any metaphysic will be incompatible with certain ethical systems, but it is much more difficult to show that any one such system is necessarily implied by a particular metaphysic. And many, among them some of the most important exponents of modern realism, are strenuous in denying their theory any ethical bias whatever. Of course they do not deny that some modern realists are also ethical theorists, but they object that these theories are not held by the realists *qua* realists, and they point with triumph to such different systems as those of Ross, Moore, Perry, Santayana, Russell, Montague, etc. Surely if these were in any way developments of the implications of realism they would have certain fundamental attitudes in common.

The contention is certainly a legitimate one. And it seems equally legitimate to reply that they have a good deal more in common than would be observed in a casual reading. For so different are the personalities, interests, emotional attitudes, and thought habits of the various realists we have just enumerated that one might at first be forgiven for pronouncing their systems altogether incompatible. But this very difference makes it more probable that any important resemblances we do find are derived from, and implied by, the realism they hold in common; and if upon examination the attitudes we find com-



mon to all their system seem logically relevant to modern realism, we may, I think, tentatively accept them as ethical attitudes implicit in it.

The important characteristics which distinguish this formal ethical theory as it is developed in the work of modern realists and which the most diverse theorists of the school have in common may perhaps be most easily grouped under seven heads.

1. Modern Realists in ethics are interested in "value" or "goodness" rather than in right. Their interest is unlike that of most recent ethical thinkers in that it focusses on things or events rather than on actions. Formally they no doubt do equate goodness with "that which ought to be" but their interest centers in the common qualities of those things which ought to be and not on a moral agent's relation to those things or on the value of doing what ought to be done.

2. Realistic ethics emphasizes the sharp disjunction between facts and values, or rather between factual and evaluative beliefs, and makes definite the insistence that because a thing happens to exist it is not, therefore, good, and that because it is good it will not, necessarily, exist. It thus avoids both the idealists' re-interpretation of facts and the naturalists' re-definition of values.

3. As a corollary to this view we get realists' unanimous agreement on the parity of good and evil, the equal metaphysical status of value and dis-value. And as soon as we accept this view we find that we have disposed of one of the most important of the old problems—the problem of evil. There is no longer any question why evil should exist. The answer is, all simply, it shouldn't. But if one asks instead why or how does it then exist, the answer again is because values in no sense govern reality

—they are simply a part of it—and bad things happen to exist just as good things do.

4. The attitude described above carries us over to the next common element in our realists' ethical systems—an element which they develop in varying degrees but which logically follows from their assertion of the reality of evil. That is their emphasis upon the "task of evil."

For although the existence of evil so explained presents no problem it does present a most urgent task. And this task of "reforming" the universe—that is, of lessening the number of evil situations and increasing the number of good ones which exist at any one time is one which (qua philosopher) only the realist is concerned with. For if either the existing evil or the ideal good is unreal there is no logical compulsion to strive against the former and for the latter. But if both are equally real it is only an unethical man (perhaps not immoral but certainly unmoral) who can remain indifferent to the substitution of an existing evil for a possible good.

5. Although this development has much in common with the more conventional ethics which begins with the idea of duty or right action, there is an essential difference between the categorical imperative of conscience and the claim goodness makes upon our championship. In the first case it is our attitude in seeking which is most important, in the other it is the nature of the thing sought. There is in realistic ethics no more emphasis upon the virtue of our desiring a good economic system than there is upon the virtue of our believing a true syllogism. The correct response to a good state of affairs (real or imaginary) is desire, just as the correct response to a beautiful statue is admiration. This attitude is essentially that implied by Socrates' statement that no man who *really knew* the good could choose the bad. The realist feels that to admit the possibility of such a choice would be as absurd

as to admit that a man could really know the truth and believe a falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

6. This parallel between the objects of belief and of approval leads us to expect that these realists will assume value to be rational in character—to be such as a rational man would be able to approve if it came to his attention—just as they frequently describe truth as what a rational man will believe when he understands it. And we find that they do accordingly emphasize this relevance to value of possible evaluation even though they do not believe that value is created by or dependent upon the act of valuing.

They all declare that transcendental values—those by their very nature meaningless to humanity—are as impossible as rationalism declares trans-logical truth or truth essentially inaccessible to the reason. A god or an ideal which is “beyond human good” is simply not good.

7. And finally this parallel leads us to a consideration of what is, perhaps, the most important single question in theoretical ethics. Do the realists carry their analogy between truth and goodness so far as to assert the existence of an objective good which is as independent of any one’s approval as their objective truth is of any one’s assent? Is our part in evaluation merely discovery, like our part in knowledge, or is it rather creation? Does “that is good” mean something quite different from “I like that”?

Here we can give no casual answer for if many contemporary realists assert this, others as explicitly deny it. But if we choose fair representatives of both factions and find that, in spite of their seeming disagreement, they do

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<sup>1</sup> Of course he would no more have to deny that a man might know early rising was good and still be kept in bed by sloth than he would have to deny that a man might know a friend to be unworthy and still through affection and old habit, act, feel, or even think as though he were worthy.

all tacitly assume some such objective status for values we shall be justified in adding this to our list of the ethical implications of realism.

The emphasis which we have here placed on the common elements in the ethical theories of our modern realists does not, of course, imply that their systems are identical or even essentially similar. In fact, it is only the wide variance of these ethical theories which makes legitimate the assertion of a relevance between their common distinguishing characteristics and the similar metaphysical and epistemological background of their authors. For when we have a group who in interests, specific beliefs, education, mental habits, etc., differ as widely as do the modern realists it does not seem unreasonable to ascribe certain elements which they all, without exception, share, to the one other thing they also possess in common.

So much for our choice of these realists as forming one reasonably distinct group. We have now to examine their ethical systems and see whether, despite strong individual differences, we can find illustrated in all of them those peculiarities which we asserted to be characteristic of realistic ethics.

The first important similarity we perceive in their ethics is their emphasis on a sharp distinction between factual and evaluative beliefs; their insistence that because a thing happens to exist, it is not, therefore, good, and that, because it is good, it will not, necessarily, exist. This assertion is, of course, merely a negation of the idealists' identification of goodness and reality, but it involves a further positive assumption of the ultimate irreducibility of evil.

All of them repeatedly and explicitly affirm the metaphysical parity of good and evil, or value and dis-value. For Perry, value is the satisfaction of interest and dis-

value is its frustration, or value is predicated of the object of positive interest and dis-value is predicated of the object of negative interest.

For Laird, value and dis-value have precisely the same logical and subsistential status, as is sufficiently shown by his statement of the "Axioms of the constitutions of values or dis-values, and axioms of the addition of independent values and dis-values."<sup>1</sup>

And Moore says, "With regard, then, to great positive evils, I think it is evident that, if we take all due precautions to discover precisely what those things are, of which, if they existed absolutely by themselves, we should judge the existence to be a great evil, we shall find most of them to be organic unities of exactly the same nature as those which are great positive goods."<sup>2</sup>

Taken by itself, this attitude is merely the intellectual recognition of an irreducible dualism in the realm of ethics, a realization that if one admits the existence of good, he must also admit the existence of evil.

But the moment we develop any positive code of ethics, the moment we adopt a standard of value which will give concrete significance to the words good and bad, or better and worse, the combination of our emotional acceptance of such values and our intellectual acceptance of the facts leads to another characteristic which sharply distinguishes realistic from idealistic ethics.

That is the realistic insistence upon a practical application of ethics. If we hold that evil is without any foundation in reality, that it is merely a transient, illusory appearance, that all discords are but parts of a larger harmony, we may, qua metaphysicians, consistently lose ourselves in contemplation of The Good and ignore all

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<sup>1</sup> Idea of Value—p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Principia Ethica—p. 208.

attempts to tune our earthly instrument. It were, at best, idle to seek a remedy where there is really no disease. But if evil is as finally and as ultimately real as good, if pain is as irreducible and actual a fact as harmony, then the situation is, logically, altered. Any code of ethics bears with it a demand for its temporal application. We cannot, as reasonable beings, permit the worse to remain when we might substitute for it the better.

This practical or melioristic emphasis on the application of value theories is very succinctly presented in an essay by Professors Montague and Parkhurst called "The Ethical and Aesthetic Implications of Realism." \*

They describe the modern realist's attitude as a combination of the simple existential realism of common sense and the profound subsistential realism of Plato, and emphasize its insistence that the totality of laws, forms, qualities, and relations, are all independent of cognition.

This attitude is, of course, a necessary basis for the ethical realist's belief that he may actually *create* a certain amount of beauty or goodness, for obviously this belief implies both a faith in the existential reality of the value-lacking situation which he wishes to alter and in the subsistential reality of the ideals which he wishes to embody.

Just as the art of sculpture would be meaningless unless the sculptor vividly realized both the formless marble and the as-yet-non-existent form he wished to impose on it, so true ethics is impossible unless the ethical man fully realizes both the valueless situation and the as-yet-non-existent value to which he wishes it to conform.

In the second part of his essay, "Belief Unbound," Pro-

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\* An instance of the material application of this attitude is a more recent article by Professor Montague called "The Geometry of the Good Life," *Columbia quarterly*, Vol. XXIV—No. 4.

fessor Montague develops more fully both his specific ethics or theory of value and his general emphasis (subscribed to by the other members of the group) on its existential embodiment.

We need not dwell longer upon such explicit expressions of his "practical interest" as "The living being must stoop to conquer. He must make his ideas conform to the facts of the world as a means of using his ideals to transform those facts."<sup>1</sup> But we may profitably take a moment to describe his specific value theory which is in somewhat marked contrast with most of those ethicists who emphasize the practical approach.

Montague begins by describing value as the actualization of potentiality and an increase in value as the more complete actualization of potentialities already present or as an increased amount of potentialities. He speaks of the only intrinsic goodness as being "the conferring upon some life system of one's own or another's, that increase of psychic being which alone is the essence of value," and concludes that "Life seeks its own maximum and the common bonum or supreme regulative criterion for values is maximum abundance of life."<sup>2</sup>

While this is a long remove from the utilitarian identification of goodness with happiness which has long been considered an almost invariable accompaniment of a practical interest in value, it still seems dangerously close to the carelessness of means and exclusive emphasis on ends which has commonly marred utilitarian ethics.

But in dealing with the moral or spiritual values Montague deliberately avoids making this assumption. In his discussion of the two invariant virtues—love or breadth of interests (or number of potentialities or tendencies)

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<sup>1</sup> *Belief Unbound*—p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Belief Unbound*—p. 57.

and enthusiasm or their intensity—he shifts the ethical emphasis from the satisfaction of an ego to its nature—from the comparative happiness of Socrates and the pig to a comparison of the happiness of which they are each capable.

And finally, in his essay on "The Missing Link in Utilitarianism" he elaborates a very ingenious defense of the quantitative incommensurability of spiritual and sensual satisfactions, describing virtue as "the permanent possibility of happiness" and showing that it is as impossible to exhaust these possibilities in a finite number of experiences as it is fully to experience a "permanent possibility of sensation" or to find the number of surfaces in any given volume.

All through these varied discussions we feel the predominance of a strong emotional and volitional reaction to value and an overwhelming interest in the actual existence—the concrete embodiment—of more and more value.

We need hardly ask if Perry with his pragmatic bias, his hedonistic definition of value as the satisfaction of interest, and his sociological emphasis, subscribes to this view. Laird devotes almost the entire "Study in Moral Theory" to a discussion of the practical course of action made imperative by a recognition of values; and even Moore, with his far greater interest in logical than in existential implications, says explicitly "That the assertion 'I am morally bound to perform this action' is identical with the assertion 'This action will produce the greatest possible amount of good in the Universe' has already been briefly shown in Chapter I; but it is important to insist that this fundamental principle is demonstrably certain."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Principia Ethica*—p. 147.



Next we find an interesting emphasis on the rational character of value, and on its necessarily human relevance. The realists, whether or not they maintain that the fact of value is independent of the act of valuing, do not admit the possibility of a value which might not be understood and esteemed by humanity, and insist that all values are intelligible. This is obvious in Perry, who holds value to be created by the act of valuing—that is, to inhere in an object only when it is the object of interest.

And while Laird and Moore are not quite as dogmatic, they are sufficiently definite to show that they feel this view of the necessity of human relevance to value is most probable. And they explicitly join Perry in denying the possibility of a transcendental good, or value. All values are for them as well as for Perry, commensurable and intelligible. To be beyond good is also to be below good. They both give almost ludicrously detailed standards of measurement which, they make clear, are intended to be applied impartially to all values.

Their idea of the rational character of ethics is not only implicit in their approach, but is made explicit by the careful parallels they draw between the application of logic to the field of thought and that of value. Perry's definition of morality, "What all men in their sober moments agree to serve is, ipso facto, a moral cause," is not a little reminiscent of Peirce's definition of rational truth, "That which all intelligent men are 'fated' (as men are 'fated' to die) in the end to believe." And in his "Moral Economy" Perry concludes a long comparison between the field of ethics and that of logic by saying, "To think conformably with reality is knowledge and to act conformably with all interests is (moral) life."<sup>1</sup>

Laird deliberately applies the axioms of formal logic to

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<sup>1</sup> Moral Economy—p. 173.

the field of value, and insists they are as fundamental to goodness as to truth. "1. (i) The axiom of Objectivity. If M has the value a, it has that value. And similarly of disvalue. (ii) If M has the value a, it cannot be without that value. And similarly of any dis-value. (iii) M must either have the value a, or not have that value. And similarly of any dis-value."<sup>1</sup>

And Moore is of course certain that the science of ethics must be as rational a system as that of geometry, beginning with certain self-evident axioms and deducing therefrom all the more detailed and particular tenets it holds.<sup>2</sup>

Montague gives an interesting instance of the material application of this attitude in "The Geometry of the Good Life"<sup>3</sup> where he deals in some detail with the commensurability of values, and the idea that positive values gain disproportionately by being concentrated, one major poet being worth far more than his weight in minor poets, and that negative values are, correspondingly, rendered less bad by being distributed.

Now that we have carried the parallel between the rationalist attitude toward truth and value so far, we have seen all our protagonists agreed both that transcendental values—those by their very nature meaningless to humanity—are as impossible as rationalism declared trans-logical truth—truth essentially inaccessible to the reason, and also that the method used in ethics should be directly patterned on that used in constructing other systems; that is, starting from a few axioms (whether these are "revealed" in in-

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<sup>1</sup> Idea of Value—pp. 349, 350.

<sup>2</sup> He takes this view so much for granted that he nowhere troubles to expound it in full, but his attitude is apparent in such passages as those on pages 1, 44, 45, 143 of the *Principia Ethica*.

<sup>3</sup> Columbia Quarterly—Vol. XXIV—No. 4.

tuition or inductively formed), they deduce a system whose validity depends on its internal consistency, on its inclusion of all relevant data, on their ability logically to prove each statement by a direct examination of the preceding statement and, finally, on a searching analysis and elaboration of the implications of the premises.

But there is still one unestablished analogy which would, if legitimate, be of the greatest importance in a discussion of ethics. It involves a return to the vexed question of whether or not there exists an objective body or standard of values, which is analogous to the objective body of facts or standard of truth, and whether man's relation to goodness and, perhaps, beauty, is not one of discovery rather than invention. Naturally it is not necessary to assert that he discovers this realm already constructed. He might very well create a theory of value as he creates a logical or mathematical system, but the straws of which his brick is made must be independent entities which he can find or knew as he does the law of identity or the number of possible permutations in a series.

If this view were admitted the ethics of modern realism would seem dangerously (or delightfully) close to those of Platonic realism. And the question of an absolute objective system of values, which is true independent of our acts of valuing, is as violently debated within the group of rational realists as in any other group.

Of the men we have discussed, Montague, Moore and Laird assert and reassert it and Perry violently dissents. And, in truth, if Perry's system did involve a postulate so foreign to his pragmatic sympathies and behavioristic approach, and so incompatible with his explicit definition, we should, I think, be justified in associating it with the realism he holds in common with the others, and in asserting that this Platonic attitude toward ethics is

implicit in modern realism. We shall, therefore, examine his system at some length, and if we find in this examination reason to say that an assumption of the objective nature of value is necessitated by his system, we shall, tentatively, assert that this assumption is a characteristic of the ethics of realism.

Perry begins his "General Theory of Value" with a resolutely empirical definition of value as the satisfaction of interest. That is, value belongs to any object only because there is some subject which favors—or values—that object. A thing good-in-itself is merely a thing desired-for-itself, and the only criterion of value for any individual is his own interest. There is no such thing as a bad desire or interest, but any interest may be considered bad insofar as it conflicts with another interest.

So far we have been using desire and interest interchangeably, but Perry wishes to restrict the application of the latter term to intelligent (human) beings, and gives a further definition of it as involving *prospicience*, or the capacity to act in the light of expectation.

We must then analyze interest and we find it composed of two distinct parts—an interest (or, roughly, desire)—and an interest-judgment. The latter is intelligent and fallible; the former is an act of favoring, not of judging, and is, therefore, infallible. It is ridiculous to speak of a thing being to my interest whether I want it or not, just as it is ridiculous to speak of a thing being to my taste whether I like it or not. And my "true good" is only the satisfaction of my interests through particular acts and objects which are chosen as adequate by true interest-judgments. There is no interest of mine which is not a true interest of mine.

So far this is consistent, intelligible, and empirically verifiable, but it seems to offer little practical evaluative

guidance and utterly to invalidate any hierarchical organization of values. In fact, it seems to do little beyond re-defining, expanding, and clarifying the assumptions of orthodox hedonism. Not only does it leave unresolved any conflict between my interest and yours, and the subsequent negative value or bad which I may find in your positive value, but it also leaves me no ground but arbitrary decision for any choice I am forced to make between two of my own interests.

Here again, however, Perry seems to have a reasonable answer. Value *per se* is created as soon as we have an interest. But moral value is only initiated when we have a conflict of interests. And then it lies in the organization of interests under "comprehensive purposes," in which organization their seeming incompatibilities are resolved. We may then call any interest relatively unworthy if it conflicts with the larger organization of interests adopted as a comprehensive purpose.

If we consider first the simpler case in which all the interests to be discussed belong to one individual, it is obvious that even then they are not all compatible with each other. But after resolving all the conflicts which admit of such a solution he will be able to decide which of the incompatible interests remaining are the strongest and, choosing those, to subordinate the rest to them. And we may then, of course, account most successful the individual who achieves the greatest amount of satisfaction of interests and the most complete integration of all his interests (including the most perfect subordination of those he cannot satisfy).

But somewhat to our surprise we find that besides these two measurements of the total value achieved by the individual Perry names a third. He is also to be accounted better if he succeeds in satisfying a greater number of

separate interests. That is, there is a greater amount of value in the partial fulfillment of six interests than in the complete satisfaction of four. There is here no special reason given for this criterion. We must wait until we have begun a discussion of inclusiveness in relation to social integration before considering its justification.

For we still have the most important practical problem in the field of values left unsolved. Ethics is (for Perry, at least) primarily a social science, and its real work is the regulation of men's relations with each other. What, then, are we to do when the interests (and consequently the values) of individuals conflict? Here it is impossible to recommend voluntary subordination of certain interests, for obviously the minority's interests are not comparable to the "minority interests" of a single organism, being really irreducible.

The first step advised by a rational understanding of ethical value is an attempt at reconciling seemingly incompatible interests by offering substitute satisfactions. But this merely postpones the issue. How are we finally to judge what possible organization of society is most valuable or best?

Perry offers us three standards of measurement which we may apply to interest and thus, indirectly, to value. The first is, as we might have expected, that of intensity. This is (with certain modifications interesting in themselves but unimportant for the present) merely the old utilitarian quantitative measure of amount of pleasure or satisfaction achieved by our organization of interests.

The second standard of measurement is that of preference, which introduces Mill's "qualitative differences of pleasures" and which is, ultimately, to be decided by himself for each individual. That is, granted a thirst (or interest in drinking) of equal intensity, one may prefer

that organization which satisfies it by red wine, another by white wine, another by water, etc.

And third and most important, any organization of interests must be measured by the standard of inclusiveness. That is, not by the amount of interest which it satisfies but by the number of different interests it—at least partially—fulfills.<sup>1</sup>

And here it seems that Perry, in attempting to construct some sort of an ethical system, has admitted at least one value which, he holds, is valuable whether or not it does satisfy any actual interest—which is valuable, not because people actually do desire it, but because they *should* desire it. That is, he says any organization of interests, whether personal or social, may objectively be criticized as better or worse in proportion as it is more or less inclusive.

In making this statement Perry seems tacitly to assume at least one objective value—the value of inclusiveness—which does not vary and is altogether independent of our interest in it.

It may be objected that a “standard of measurement” in the field of values is no more a value than a “standard of measurement” in the field of potatoes is a potato. True, so long as our standard in the first case remains as purely quantitative as our pound in the second. But if such a purely quantitative standard were all Perry wished—if he merely meant to assert that a greater amount of value was more valuable than a smaller amount—why needed

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<sup>1</sup> Perry does, once, assert that inclusiveness signifies the perfect fulfillment of all possible interests, and in that passage he seems to imply that it cannot be applied as a measurement until it has reached the absolute degree. But not only would this reduce the standard to a tautology—for obviously any organization of values which includes all possible values is better than one which includes only some values—and render it irrelevant to any human society, it would also make contradictory and meaningless Perry's later discussion in which he speaks of criticizing social organizations for being “more or less inclusive.”

he introduce inclusiveness? Why not stop with the obviously quantitative standard of amount or intensity? What except the assumption of the value of inclusiveness (or of the value of proportion or organization or variety or justice) could justify the assumption that it is better for society partially to satisfy the interests of almost all its classes than fully to satisfy those of a few classes?

And although this standard of value is, chronologically, introduced only in the conclusion, we realize that it is logically the very foundation of the *General Theory of Value*. Its fundamental importance is even more obvious when we read Perry's earlier work, the *Moral Economy*, which begins with the ideal of inclusiveness and expounds in more general terms precisely the same theory of ethical values, basing it explicitly upon this assumption of the value of inclusiveness.

It does not seem that a careful analysis of this third standard of measurement as it is presented in the *General Theory of Value*, can ignore its tacit assumption that the value of inclusiveness is absolute, unvarying, objective and completely independent of any interest we may or may not take in it personally. Nor does it seem possible to devise (on the basis of Perry's definition of value) any system save the strictly quantitative one of Bentham or the more logical moral anarchy of individual hedonism, unless we are willing to posit the supreme value of some such principle of organization as he admits.

While this is Perry's outstanding and most conclusive admission of the reality of a "subsistential" value, there are several other contexts in which his statements—or their necessary implications—seem to point to some such realm.

To begin with, he carefully abstracts any existential content from the significance of "value." A thing which



never has existed and never will exist (universal goodwill, for instance) can and often does have the highest degree of value. But Perry hastens to explain that this does not admit a subsistential realm, real despite its lack of factual existence. It merely re-defines a value as that which could satisfy an interest did the object possessing the value exist, and the existential factor is not ruled out but is merely transferred to the interest.

But a little later we find this definition further modified. There is, it seems, a far greater range of values than of present or past interests, and a truly comprehensive survey would allow for all values which are the possible objects of non-existent as well as of existent interests. In fact, anything which might conceivably be the object of interest is truly valuable even prior to the birth of such an interest, and a good organization of interests must allow for the satisfaction of all these logically possible interests as well as that of all the empirically experienced ones.

There is yet another context in which Perry seems to approach some objective and absolute description of value—a description not provided for in its definition as the potential or actual satisfaction of unqualified interest.

This is just hinted at in the discussion of preference where, although individual differences of taste are final and irreconcilable, mention is made of the decision of an "expert intelligent judge." But this suggestion is withdrawn as soon as breathed, and if we had no more definite appeal to an expert or "rational" standard, we should ignore its mention.

But we do find such an appeal in Perry's repeated reference to the standard he makes explicit in his definition of a moral cause—"What all men in their sober moments agree to serve is, ipso facto, a moral cause."

Now either this definition is based on a pious distrust of empirical evidence and an equally pious faith in the consensus of interest of mankind, or it is a somewhat ironical statement of the present (and probable future) non-existence of any moral cause, or it is in reality the definition of moral cause as that which every "rational man" (in the Aristotelian sense) would agree to serve. If we adopt this last interpretation, we are, in effect, removing moral value from the field determined by unqualified interest and are re-defining it as the satisfaction of all rational interests which, we further presume, agree just as all rational judgments as to truth must finally agree.

Verbally one might save the original definition of a moral cause by saying that a man who consistently refused to serve such a cause simply did not experience any sober moment, but that requires a prior definition of "such a cause" which, obviously, would have to be based on something beside a unanimous consensus of opinion.

In other words, any interpretation of either Perry's definition of a moral cause or his many and varied references to it, would make it necessary for us to assume one of two things. We must either assume that Perry's view includes a facile optimism and a blind misapprehension of actual conditions—that, in truth, there is no such thing as a moral cause in the present or predictable future—or that a moral cause is that which all men *should* agree to serve. If we choose the latter alternative we have introduced an objective ethical standard which, far from being constituted by unqualified interest, is a valid standard by which to measure the sobriety and morality of a man's interests.

From the three indications developed above—from Perry's introduction of the standard of inclusiveness, which assumes its own supreme value, from his insistence

on the duty of considering values when the interests whose satisfaction is to create them have not yet been, and may never be, born, and, finally, from his reliance both implicit and explicit on the common interests of all rational men which are presumed ultimately to agree and to form a criterion of moral value—we may, it seems, conclude that in Perry's system too there is a real (albeit a troublesome, inconsistent, and often denied) recognition of the absolute or independent and objective character of at least certain values, and that this ethical realism is, to some extent, necessitated by his metaphysical realism.

We now come to another curious characteristic which modern realists betray when adventuring in the field of ethics. That is their Platonic-æsthetic attitude.

By this we do not, of course, mean to impute to them any special interest in æsthetic values. With the possible exception of Moore, those we have discussed show an unusually exclusive interest in the field of ethical values and a tendency almost to ignore the very existence of any other type of value.

But despite this traditional emphasis on ethics their approach is one which has become very strange during years of authoritarian religious ethics, categorical imperatives, and idealistic mysticism.

There are, in all the many pages of Perry, Laird, and Moore, not a dozen references to "conscience," "duty," or "right and wrong." Their attitude toward values approximates that of the art critic to beauty or that of the scientist to truth. They no more begin by saying, "It is one's duty to be kind," than the one would say, "It is your duty to admire the *Odyssey*," or the other would say, "It is your duty to believe the law of gravitation." They merely say (with what justification does not, for the moment, concern us), "There is ethical value in kindness,"

as one might say, "There is beauty in the *Odyssey*," or "There is truth in the law of gravitation."

There is no emphasis on the moral obligation of pursuing the good. The compulsion, such as it is, comes from the object itself or from reason. A man who understands ethical values can no more help accepting them than a man who understands beauty can help admiring it or one who understands truth can help believing it.

It is of the nature of the thing to be accepted, and while an individual must possess some intelligence and appreciation in order to perceive this quality, once he has perceived it he can do nothing but realize its logical implications.

This attitude is essentially the Platonic attitude in ethics—the attitude which treats ethical qualities as goods-in-themselves, things whose intrinsic value one need only truly see in order to accept them. And once seen, no rational person can fail to realize that it is of the nature of the thing to be sought—that the thing is, by definition, what he desires.

Perry's general attitude may seem foreign to this view, but his repeated reference to the decision of the "expert" and his avowed faith in the ultimate agreement of all rational men on questions of moral value make clear enough his parallel of ethical, logical, and æsthetic values.

Nor does he, despite his insistence on the need of considering all interests, say that it is the duty of the individual to do so. He merely points out that that is the good thing to do—that if the satisfaction of one interest is good, the satisfaction of two interests is twice as good—and drops the matter. There is no persuasion or coercion to do the good thing. It is obviously the correct thing to do in the situation. A rational person could no more deliberately choose to achieve less ethical value than he

could choose ugliness rather than beauty. Socrates would feel perfectly at home in the presentation of this view.

Laird, of course, speaks of appreciation of good or beauty as immediate intuition of their intrinsic value, and bases the reasons for obligation not upon any subjective feeling or upon the prompting of conscience, but upon judgments of value. Anyone who perceives ethical value, says Laird, realizes that it is of its nature to be desired—that that is a logical corollary to its possession of goodness—"ethics is not a hortatory study— If it shows the good and the just, it need not exhort us concerning them, for their authority is too fine a thing for praise or meddling urgings."<sup>1</sup>

And Moore, describing good as an ultimate indefinable, attacks the idea of a good will or of virtue as the sole or most importance ethical predicate, denies the validity of the feeling of obligation, and rests the real argument for ethical conduct on its own nature. It is obvious, he holds, that man's only problem is to find out what, specifically, is good to do; it is a foregone conclusion that that thing is the thing he wants to do.

This reliance on man as a rational creature who needs no appeal beyond that of the logical or æsthetic fitness of what should be done—this emphasis on the nature of goodness or value rather than on the nature of the good man—is in harmony with the objective rational attitude realists carry into the field of ethics and is one of the strongest resemblances between Platonic and modern realism. For here too, as we have seen, it is taken for granted that all men—or, rather, all rational men—can and will see values correctly and must, perforce, act in accordance with their knowledge.

We have still one important point left to discuss, the

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<sup>1</sup> A Study of Moral Theory—p. 14.

realists' attitude toward the value of truth. The title "theory of value" generally applicable to their work seems happily chosen to permit their dealing with the whole of the classic triad, the good, the true, and the beautiful. And although we have seen that they somewhat slight "the beautiful" there is no indication that their general attitude and approach to this field of value is not the same as that used in dealing with ethics. But it is much more difficult to decide the precise position of truth considered as a value.

Is it for them, as it is for most scientists, of supreme importance? Is there an intrinsic value in the knowledge of truth which far outweighs any pain or practical difficulty or loss of æsthetic enjoyment it may entail?

Moore, not putting the case quite as strongly as this, seems to feel that the value of truth, while comparable to other values, is extraordinarily great. He says, "The question I am putting is this: Whether the whole constituted by the fact that there is an emotional contemplation of a beautiful object, which both is believed to be and is real, does not derive some of its value from the fact that that object is real? I am asking whether the value of this whole, as a whole, is not greater than that of those which differ from it, either by the absence of belief, with or without truth, or, belief being present, by the mere absence of truth? . . . If, now, we put the question I cannot avoid thinking that we should receive an affirmative answer . . . I think we should definitely pronounce the existence of a universe . . . to be greatly inferior in value to one in which the objects, in the existence of which he believes, did really exist just as he believes them to do; and that it would be thus inferior not only because it would lack the goods which consist in the existence of

the objects in question, but also merely because his belief would be false.”<sup>1</sup>

Laird seems to hold essentially the same view and, in addition, he makes it fairly clear that in any specific choice between two values, that of truth would probably obtain his preference. He says, “. . . philosophers do say that truth, beauty, righteousness, sentient happiness, together with love and human affection are the ‘great values,’ ”<sup>2</sup> that truth is one of the self-justifying values, along with art and morality, and that “A truth which is dangerous or ugly or morally subversive is none the less a truth, and these alarming tendencies if they exist are scientifically irrelevant.”<sup>3</sup>

Perry neither asks nor answers the question.

Explicitly, then, we have found that two declare for the classic tried and that the third does not commit himself. And yet we feel that in this matter neither these explicit statements nor this silence adequately represents their answer to the problem. It seems partly too much taken for granted, partly too much an emotional reaction, to have been expressed in intellectual terms. But in even the most casual reading one cannot fail to realize an unquestioning non-evaluative adherence to the search for truth which is akin to the traditional attitude of the scientist and seems almost to approximate the response evoked by Kant’s categorical imperative.

In fact, so overwhelming is this reverence for truth that it, in some degree, bridges the gulf between facts and values, for the true knowledge of even the most evil of facts seems for these realists in itself an exemplar of the supreme value.

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<sup>1</sup> *Principia Ethica*—p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Theory of Value*—p. IV.

<sup>3</sup> *I bid*—p. 45.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISINTERESTEDNESS

Century after century those philosophers clearsighted and ruthless enough to realize the inevitable dichotomy between facts and values, the inevitable defeat of the ideal by the real, have been forced to re-discover the one ethical attitude which seems able to withstand even the corrosive effects of such knowledge—the ethics of disinterestedness. Plato and Epicurus and Spinoza and Schopenhauer and, finally, Santayana have, each in their individual ways and with their own varying emphases, re-asserted that

“—better than anything good  
Is mastery in the using,  
And sweeter than all that is sweet  
The art to lay it aside.”

And whether one calls it hypostatization or the direct intuition of an ultimate value, in every case this æsthetic attitude, which may have been adopted as the least of many evils or as a necessary shield against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, this simple device for the attainment of some measure of contentment, is metamorphosized so strangely that the buckler becomes more important than the battle, and the successful maintenance of the attitude is more to be desired than any happiness one could possibly obtain without it.

In spite of the many stimulating occasional essays and fragmentary discussions there has recently been so little sustained work in the field of æsthetic realism that we are perhaps justified in devoting this chapter almost entirely to a detailed study of the realistic ethics which



emerges in the course of Santayana's writings and to a contrast of this view with the stoic idealism developed by one of his disciples—Walter Lippman.

Instead of proceeding here, as we did in the foregoing chapter, to take the characteristics of ethical realism in order and justify our ascription of each of them to the system under consideration, we will rather attempt a logical summary of Santayana's ethical position and see how far this position does accept and emphasize those characteristics.

Perhaps the most unequivocal and apparent of all Santayana's ethical views is his attitude on the "problem of evil."

Nature, or existence, is intrinsically neither good nor bad and those naturalists who idealize its impersonal laws are as foolish as those anthropomorphic moralists who expect them to express human hopes and ideas. In "The Moral Background,"<sup>1</sup> Santayana says, "These naturalists, while they rebuke the moralists for thinking nature is ruled magically for our good, think her adorable for being ruled, in scorn of us, only by her own laws; and thus we oscillate between egotism and idolatry." Later in "Materialism and Idealism"<sup>2</sup> he elaborates the essentially neutral value of material existence "But the intense reality of the material world would not prevent it from being an abyss of horror, if it brought forth no spiritual fruits. In fact, it does bring forth spiritual fruits, for otherwise we should not be able to find fault with it, and to set up our ideals over against it. Nature is material but not materialistic; it issues in life and breeds all sorts of warm passions and idle beauties."

Again in "Carnival"<sup>3</sup> he repeats, "Existence is not it-

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<sup>1</sup> Character and Opinion in the United States—p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid—p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> Soliloquies in England—p. 139.

self a good, but only an opportunity. Christians thank God for their creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but life is also the condition and source of all evil . . .” and in his “Philosophy of Henri Bergson”<sup>1</sup> he explicitly asserts that the standards of excellence must necessarily be completely free from any existential implication and that they cannot be proven or even indicated by the nature of life. “The course of evolution is no test of true or good; else nothing could be good intrinsically nor true simply and ultimately; on the contrary, it is the approach to truth and excellence anywhere, like the approach of treetops to the sky, that tests the value of evolution, and determines whether it is moving upward or downward or in a circle.”

The only reason one can offer for calling a thing good or bad is that it pleases or displeases some animal, and therefore there is no more problem presented by the existence of evil than by the existence of good. In “Josiah Royce”<sup>2</sup> there is an excellent illustration of the way in which the modern realists have cut this time-honored Gordian knot tied by idealism, “. . . the problem of evil; a terrible and urgent problem when your first postulate or dogma is that moral distinctions and moral experience are the substance of the world and not merely an incident in it . . .”<sup>3</sup> So the question why it is right there should be any evil is itself perverse and raised by false presumptions. To an unsophisticated mortal the existence of evil presents a task, never a problem. Evil, like error, is an incident of animal life inevitable in a crowded and unsettled world where one spontaneous movement is likely to thwart another and all to run against material impossibilities.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Winds of Doctrine*—p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Character and Opinion in the United States*—p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*—p. 106, 107.

There is, however, a task presented by evil, and this task is, as we shall soon see, the very foundation and *raison d'être* of morality. The task of morality is "to subdue nature to the uses of the soul." Nor is soul used in any supernatural sense. For in the world of morality we are concerned only with natural desires and needs in their elementary states and in the co-ordination and organization the human animal itself, after some experience, imposes on them.

Moral judgments are merely expressions of deep-rooted likes or dislikes, desires or fears; they are grounded in the needs of animal life and guided by the laws of expediency. "The ethical attitude doubtless has no *ethical* ground, but that fact does not prevent it from having a *natural* ground; and the observer of the animate creation need not have much difficulty in seeing what that natural ground is."<sup>1</sup>

Once this moral attitude has been developed, however, it naturally influences us to forget its basis and to hypostatize our judgments until they seem to be descriptive of impersonal objective values. "When we mortals have once assumed the moral attitude it is certain that an indefinable value accrues to some things as opposed to others, that these things are many, that combinations of them have values not belonging to their parts, and that these valuable things are far more specific than abstract pleasures and far more diffused than one's personal life."<sup>2</sup>

Nor is this rationalization to be dispraised or lightly discarded. For of all the needs of the human animal the most urgent is his need to dignify his experiences—to invest his aims with a spurious importance (not spurious, of course, as far as he is concerned) and to find some

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<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy* of Bertrand Russell—p. 114, 115.

<sup>2</sup> *I bid*—p. 154.

value outside of himself which will give meaning to his organization of his life. "Man is certainly an animal that, when he lives at all, lives for ideals. Something must be found to occupy his imagination, to raise pleasure and pain into love and hatred, and change the prosaic alternations between comfort and discomfort into the tragic one between happiness and sorrow." <sup>1</sup>

Obviously there is in this exposition of the good no excuse for arranging the varying ideals of different men in any sort of hierarchy or for judging their actions from any viewpoint but that of their own intentions. Each man may and must decide for himself what he ultimately wants, but if he has once decided that oblivion is his nearest desire then it is only hemlock which is really good for him. Pre-rational morality—the immediate favorable or unfavorable reaction to a situation—is the basis of all morality and the only ground for our judgment of "This is good" or "This is evil." "Pre-rational morality is vigorous because it is sincere. Actual interests, rooted habits, appreciations the opposite of which is inconceivable and contrary to the current use of language, are embodied in special precepts; or they flare up of themselves in impassioned judgments. It is hardly too much to say, indeed, that pre-rational morality is morality proper." <sup>2</sup>

The only external standard by which an individual morality might, conceivably, be criticized is that of harmony—the harmony he has achieved, internally by arranging a hierarchy of his desired goods, an architecture of his peculiar values, and the harmony he has helped to achieve in society by due allowance for the interests of other systems. But Santayana is not unduly optimistic

<sup>1</sup> Intellectual Temper of the Age—p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Reason in Science—p. 213.

as to the perfect or almost-perfect achievement of this sort of rational morality. He says "A rational morality would imply perfect self-knowledge, so that no congenial good should be needlessly missed—least of all practical reason or justice itself; so that no good congenial to other creatures should be needlessly taken from them. The total value which everything had from the agent's viewpoint would need to be determined and felt efficaciously; and among other things, the total value which this point of view, with the conduct it justified, would have for every foreign intent it affected."<sup>1</sup>

But there is another aspect of morality which somewhat neutralizes the moral anarchy that, at first, seems a necessary consequence of this theory. That is the fact that morality, while not really concerned with judging ultimate values—things good or evil in themselves—is almost entirely concerned with deciding on means, on the right or wrong way of going about things, on the right or wrong action in any given situation.

Of course its function is often misinterpreted and what was originally merely the right thing to do becomes finally the good thing to want. "Men know better what is right and wrong than what is ultimately good or evil; their conscience is more visibly present to them than the fruits which obedience to conscience might bear; so that the logical relation of means to ends, of methods to activities, eludes them altogether."<sup>2</sup>

Yet even if we avoid this error and consistently adopt Santayana's utilitarian interpretation of morality this would not in itself explain why we do, empirically, find such surprising unanimity of moral judgment. For if

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<sup>1</sup> Reason in Science—p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Reason in Science—p. 227.

men's ends were altogether different it would be little short of miraculous that they should all strive to obtain those varied ends by the same means. Nor would the similarity in human structure and character altogether account for the uniformity of men's moral judgments if those judgments, like æsthetic ones, depended simply on taste and distaste.

We must, in order to understand this phenomenon, return to an aspect of morality merely hinted at before—its preoccupation with evil, with danger, with the negative values. Moral conduct is not primarily intended to enable men to secure the goods which each of them may, individually, desire, but rather to enable them to avoid the disasters which none of them can help fearing. Morality is not concerned with the attainment of pleasure, but with the prevention of suffering. "It is the price of human non-adaptation and the consequences of the original sin of unfitness." "It is the compression of human conduct within the narrow limits of the safe and possible. Remove danger, remove pain, remove the occasion of pity, and the need of morality is gone. To say 'thou shalt not' would be an impertinence."<sup>1</sup>

This description of morality as chiefly concerned with negative values brings us to the further question of the constitution of those values. Since morality is only a science of means how may we determine our ends? What criterion will tell us whether things are good or evil? What consequences is man really trying to secure or avoid by his rules of conduct? And the answer is that the only ~~real values are not moral but æsthetic~~—are the immediate pleasures of sense perception, appreciation of beauty and satisfied intellectual curiosity. Nor is this immediate æsthetic appreciation in need of any further claim to

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<sup>1</sup> The Sense of Beauty—p. 30.

validity. Its own existence suffices. "Philosophers would do a great discourtesy to estimation if they sought to justify it. It is all other acts that need justification by this one. The good greets us intrinsically in every experience and in every object."<sup>1</sup>

And not only is it true that the only things intrinsically good and fit to be ends are these æsthetic satisfactions, and that morality is subservient to æsthetics in this sense, but it is also true that morality itself achieves its finest and most significant climax when virtues originally enforced as necessary and perhaps distasteful means come to be considered æsthetically as desirable in and for themselves. "Not only are the various satisfactions which morals are meant to secure æsthetic in the last analysis, but when the conscience is formed, and right principles acquire an immediate authority, our attitude to them becomes æsthetic also . . . this æsthetic sensitiveness . . . is the æsthetic demand for the morally good (honor, truthfulness and cleanness are obvious examples) and is, perhaps, the finest flower of human nature."<sup>2</sup>

It is now obvious that when we succeeded in accounting for a certain amount of uniformity in our individual moralities we were only postponing the question. For when we leave the discussion of the immediate right and wrong and come to deal with that of the social or universal good we see that there is no way to go beyond each individual's private æsthetic judgments. There can be no hierarchy of good outside the single animal's own arrangement of his particular delights. Each man's tastes and desires are as correct as those of the next man and an equally noble perfection is possible for every sort of creature. There is no sense in comparing animals as

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<sup>1</sup> Reason in Science—p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> The Sense of Beauty—p. 3.

higher or lower, and there is less sense in any animal's trying to ape or live up to another's standard. "Inequality was honorable; among the humblest there could be dignity and sweetness; the higher snobbery would have been absurd, because if you were not content to be what you were now, how could you ever be content with anything?"<sup>1</sup>

This aesthetic evaluation is, finally, an individual's emotional reaction to the objects present in his experience, and the science of ethics and æsthetics can only describe, discuss, and analyze, but not judge or change, this primary activity. "The first (way of approaching ethics) is the exercise of the moral or æsthetic faculty itself, the actual pronouncing of judgment and giving of praise, blame and precept. This is not a matter of science but of character, enthusiasm, niceness of perception, and fineness of emotion. It is æsthetic or moral activity, while ethics and æsthetics as sciences are intellectual activities having that æsthetic or moral activity for their subject matter."<sup>2</sup>

Practically as soon as a man's behaviour interferes too much with his fellows it will have to be checked, but this is no more a condemnation of his values than it would be a condemnation of a man's goal to say that an impassible river interposed between him and it. Except insofar as men happen to want the same things there is no common set of values or standard of evaluation. The only universal imperative is the freedom each should permit his fellows to enjoy in pursuing their own varied ends. Santayana, defending his own attitude in the essay "On My Friendly Critics" says "They do not see that it is because I love life that I wish to keep it sweet, so as to be able to love it altogether; and that all I wish for others, or

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<sup>1</sup> The Irony of Liberalism—p. 181

<sup>2</sup> The Sense of Beauty—p. 5.



dare to recommend to them, is that they should keep their lives sweet also, not after my fashion, but each man in his own way.”<sup>1</sup>

Even when tolerance is, practically, impossible, it should still determine one's mental attitude and we should realize, while doing our best to destroy our adversaries, that from any impersonal viewpoint it would be quite as good a result if they managed to destroyed us. “In this lies the chivalry of war, that we acknowledge the right of other to pursue ends contrary to our own.”<sup>2</sup>

And of course there is always the chance that competitors intelligent enough to realize the completely relative nature of the good for which they are fighting may “ultimately wish to renounce that temporal good which deprives them of spiritual goods in truth infinitely greater and more appealing to the soul—innocence, justice, intelligence. . . . They may even aspire to detachment from those private interests which, as Plato said, do not deserve to be taken too seriously; the fact that we must take them seriously being the ignoble part of our condition.”<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, however, there is absolutely no standard by which we may judge men's varying goods, and value, in the only sense in which Santayana has so far discussed it, may be unqualifiedly defined as the satisfaction of (or that which will satisfy) desire.

This position is a thoroughly naturalistic one and completely in accordance with Santayana's explicit metaphysics. If he stopped here we should have no quarrel with him on the ground of inconsistency, although the tone of the last quotation, representing as it does the tone of so

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<sup>1</sup> Soliloquies in England—p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> Reason in Science—p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid—p. 236.

much of Santayana's writings, hints at the cloven hoof of the ethical absolutist.

But the morality we have so far discussed is only one part—and by far the lesser part—of his ethical system. His more important ethics are those governing the spiritual life—the ethics of disinterestedness.

And in constructing this part of his ethics Santayana introduces a new and unassimilated element—an element which necessitates a break in the deterministic system logically developed from his materialism. That element is the life of pure spirit which expresses itself in an attitude of disinterested understanding and appreciation, and which is the goal all human animals *should* attempt to reach and is, from an impersonal viewpoint, the one really good life.

This discontinuity between the other activities of man and the activity of the understanding is strikingly like that we find in Spinoza who also defines moral good and evil in terms of desire and aversion, but, with a startling leap, finds an objectively real good in the knowledge of the truth; which knowledge is somehow to be achieved by an effort of will that man is not only free to make actually, but *ought* to make ethically.

Santayana in his first formulation bases the value of the spiritual life on the Epicurean principle, pointing out the great amount of pain to be avoided by a cessation of desire. “. . . but when rationally conceived as it was by Spinoza, it amounts to this: that good and evil are relations which things bear to the living beings they affect. In itself nothing—much less this whole mixed universe—can be either good or bad; but the universe wears the aspect of a good in so far as it feeds, delights, or otherwise fosters any creature within it. If we define the intellect as the power to see things as they are, it is clear

that in so far as the philosopher is a pure intellect the universe will be pure good to the philosopher; everything in it will give play to his peculiar passion. Wisdom counsels us, therefore, to become philosophers and to concentrate our lives as much as possible in pure intelligence, that we may be led by it into the ways of peace."<sup>1</sup>

But if we accept this as a statement of his attitude toward the spiritual life it is difficult to understand why he should maintain that this life, so seldom sought or achieved as a matter of fact, and so incapable of attracting the majority of mankind even in image is the properly human one which ought to be desired by every thinking animal and is somehow on a level different from that of any other object of desire. Such passages as "To substitute the society of ideas for that of things is simply to live in the mind; it is to survey the world of existences in its truth and beauty rather than in its personal perspectives or with practical urgency. It is the sole path to happiness for the intellectual man because the intellectual man cannot be satisfied with a world of perpetual change, defeat and imperfection. It is the path trodden by ancient philosophers and modern saints or poets; not, of course, by modern writers on philosophy (except Spinoza) because these have not been philosophers in the vital sense; they have practised no spiritual discipline, suffered no change of heart, but lived on exactly like other professors, and exerted themselves to prove the existence of a God favorable to their own desires, instead of searching for the God that happens to exist,"<sup>2</sup> and such remarkable paradoxes as "Let us therefore be frankly human. Let us be content to live in the mind," seem to point to a far greater respect for the life of the spirit than could reason-

<sup>1</sup> Josiah Royce, *Character & Opinion in the United States*—pp. 110, 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Society and Solitude, Soliloquies in England*—p. 121.

ably be based on empirical observation or explained in terms of animal desire.

In fact, Santayana's attitude here seems inexplicable unless we realize he agrees with Plato and, more immediately, with Spinoza, that the only human perfection lies in knowledge of the truth and that the love of understanding is the only desire whose object has a value not created by that desire.

When we follow him into his discussion of the pure spirit whose function is dispassionate understanding and æsthetic appreciation and which governs man in the spiritual life, we find that here his dogma as well as his attitude is discontinuous and inconsistent with the deterministic naturalism of his metaphysics, and with his earlier explanation of values. For we find that this spirit, although it arises in the human animal and requires this material base to make possible its existence, is uncaused, unpredictable, and inexplicable in terms of its ground, and is, moreover, the only thing which gives the animal any real value. "Spirit refuses to be caught in a vise; it triumphs over the existence which begets it. The moving world which feeds it is not its adequate theme. Spirit hates its father and mother. It spreads from its burning focus into the infinite, careless whether that focus burns to ashes or not. From its pinnacle of earthly time it pours its little life into spheres not temporal nor earthly, and half in playfulness, half in sacrifice, it finds its joy in the irony of eternal things, which know nothing of it."<sup>1</sup> "The acme of vitality lies in truth in the most comprehensive and penetrating thought. The rhythms, the sweep, the impetuosity of impassioned contemplation not only contain in themselves a great vitality and potency, but

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<sup>1</sup> Prologue, *Soliloquies in England*—p. 2.

they often succeed in engaging the lower functions in a sympathetic vibration, and we see the whole body and soul rapt, as we say, and borne along by the harmonies of imagination and thought.”<sup>1</sup>

The ethics governing the life of spirit (the only truly ethical life) consists of the two virtues of piety and spirituality. At times, when Santayana waxes rhapsodic, piety would seem to be an emotional loyalty toward the material nature from which spirit springs but as we have already seen “Spirit hates its father and mother,” and as we soon shall see this emotional attachment would make impossible the crowning glory of spirituality. And in the last analysis this loyalty is resignation to nature’s power, not to nature’s value, since existence is repeatedly declared value-less. It implies only the scornful but unrebelling realization of the facts and forces of existence.

In his essay “On My Friendly Critics”<sup>2</sup> he says of himself “I can always say to myself that my atheism, like that of Spinoza, is true piety towards the universe and denies only gods fashioned by men in their own image, to be servants of their human interests; and that even in this denial I am no rude iconoclast, but full of secret sympathy with the impulses of idolaters. My detachment from things and persons is also affectionate, and simply what the ancients called philosophy; I consent that a flowing river should flow; I renounce that which betrays; I rejoice that everyone should have his own tastes and pleasures.”

The other truly ethical virtue, as is implied in the above brief description of the ethics of disinterestedness, is that of spirituality. This is freedom from the bonds of animal interest and desire, ability to discard all other passions

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<sup>1</sup> Reason in Common Sense—p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Soliloquies in England—p. 247

and fears and to live a life whose value is intrinsic and centered at every point in the delight of æsthetic perception and intellectual contemplation.

Nor is this disinterestedness of value merely because it enables the animal possessing it to lead a pleasanter life. On the contrary, the fact that it does occasionally live in the spirit is the only thing which really justifies animal life. "Spirit is not an instrument but a realization, a fruition. At every stage and wherever it peeps out through the interstices of existence it is the contemplation of eternal things."<sup>1</sup> "To recount man's rational moments would be to take an inventory of all his goods; for he is not himself (as we say with unconscious accuracy) in the others. If he ever appropriates them in recollection or prophecy, it is only on the ground of some physical relation which they may have to his being."<sup>2</sup> "But good and evil, like light and shade, are ethereal; all things, events, persons, and conventional virtues are in themselves utterly valueless, save as an immaterial harmony (of which mind is an expression) plays about them on occasion, when their natures meet propitiously, and bathes them in some tint of happiness or beauty."<sup>3</sup>

That there is a definite break between morality and the ethics of disinterestedness is emphasized by Santayana's statement that the spiritual life is not only not based upon, but is often opposed to, the life of morality. And while, logically, either may justly be criticized from the viewpoint of the other, Santayana leaves us in no doubt as to his decision that the only valid and final criterion is that of the spiritual life and that, while the judgments of

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<sup>1</sup> Reversion to Platonism, *Soliloquies in England*—p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Reason in Common Sense—p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Josiah Royce, *Character & Opinion in the United States*—p. 121.

morality may be practically necessary, they have no claim upon our allegiance or admiration.

The objective reality of this value—its independence of man's valuing—the belief that men *should* strive to be disinterested because disinterestedness *is* the supreme good, and not that disinterestedness is good because men like being disinterested is, in truth, the core of Santayana's ethics. And how far this attitude takes us from his apparent naturalism toward platonic realism is really clear only when we contrast Santayana's treatment of disinterestedness as an ideal with the development of it as a technique by so unplatonic a disciple as Lippman.

Since Walter Lippman is avowedly a disciple of Santayana, and since he is one of the few in this group who have written at any length upon the subject, we may profit by a somewhat detailed examination of the striking contrast between his ethical attitude and Santayana's.

The traditional disinterestedness, as interpreted by Santayana, is of course Epicurean rather than Stoical. That is, it is based on the realization that the universe is not governed in accordance with our wishes rather than on the decision to wish in accordance with its government, on the realization that good and evil are applicable to things only in their relations to human desires rather than on the belief that a transcendental goodness is to be found in the laws governing things, and on the realization that this attitude is its own justification rather than on the faith that it is justified by the rightness of those forces to which it voluntarily submits.

Its distinguishing characteristics are an unmoved recognition of rather unpleasant facts, a greater breadth for the intellectual horizon, now no longer bounded by hopes and fears and practical interests, and a proud independence of any end save its own completion and perfection.

So when we find a pupil of Santayana proclaiming that this difficult, rare and most desirable attitude has, in our modern world, suddenly become practicable for the majority, we may be incredulous but we must be interested. For, as Walter Lippman himself shows in the first part of his "Preface to Morals," never were men more in need of some such substitute for the easy optimism of religion and popular idealism to which they can no longer cling. And in his "high religion" Lippman puts just such a panacea as this Santayanian disinterestedness within the reach of the average man as well as of the perfect philosopher.

This high religion, he says, is made so generally available by the growth of our machine industries and of the consequent big business era. For the tasks of society are now so complicated and numerous, the business each man must engage in is, in its entirety, so much too vast and intricate for any one individual to grasp, that the modern man is forced to concentrate on the particular job he happens to hold, to focus his interest on its immediate demands, and to ignore its distant ramifications, its final relation to other similar pieces of work done by other equally ignorant men, and its ultimate purpose.

We begin to suspect that all is not as it should be when we notice that here disinterestedness connotes a tremendous contraction of man's intellectual horizon, a pious faith that our finished piece of work will, somehow, fit in with other such pieces of work, and a practical justification in the increased efficiency such concentration will entail. Furthermore, when we examine this disinterestedness we find that its fortunate possessor is not really disinterested at all. For though he may, while doing his work, temporarily forget all else he is not really indifferent as to its immediate issue nor is he ordinarily doing



it for itself without a definitely understood (if unexpressed) desire for the wage it earns.

There is here a triple confusion. First Mr. Lippman, seems implicitly to assume the major premise the Stoics made explicit "All is ordered by a well-meaning providence and in playing the parts it assigns us we are doing our utmost to further its design"; second he seems to ignore the distinction between seeking disinterestedness as a way of life because it is a good-in-itself and seeking it in a certain very limited field because it promotes efficiency in that field; and third he seems to mistake uninterestedness for disinterestedness. He says "He (the ordinary executive in a great corporation) is so little the monarch of all he surveys, his experience is so continually with stubborn and irreducible facts, he is so much compelled to adjust his own preferences to the preferences of others, that he becomes a relatively disinterested person."<sup>1</sup> Now this is not a description of disinterestedness. It is not a description of anything but the resignation and surrender of utter weariness, a surrender colored by that resentment which any access of energy would kindle into futile rebellion. And unless his weariness is so complete that he can no longer formulate a wish such a man will still wish for the same things, albeit he no more expects or even dares hope for the fulfillment of his desires.

Clearly such oblivious concentration is no ideal and would never be sought as an end in itself. It may serve its purpose for the meliorist as a means of more efficient application and its mechanical absorption may afford the pessimist a more effective drug with which to deaden the gnawing pain of disillusionment. But it must not be confused with, and it can never lead to, the objective attitude of the philosopher who notes and weighs the joys and

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Morals*—p. 257.

sorrows of his universe, finding in its varied shapes and meanings sufficient beauty and interest to fill full his life.

In order to make at all meaningful Lippman's idea that the attitude fostered by the size and complexity of modern business is one of disinterestedness it would be necessary for us to re-define that term, restricting its significance to an intellectual recognition of facts and omitting all mention of the corresponding emotional indifference.

This step Mr. Lippman might not be averse to making explicit. For the moral indifference upon which Epicurean disinterestedness has always been so insistent is as foreign to Stoicism as the emphasis Epicureanism places on keen intellectual and æsthetic interest. But if we consent to re-define disinterestedness as merely an intellectual recognition of facts we not only omit an element traditionally included in its definition but we are also forced to exclude the connotations which are essentially characteristic of disinterestedness as an ideal of conduct or way of life.

For while the intellectual objectivity and curiosity are the differentia of our definition—are needed to distinguish disinterestedness from apathy or the painful resignation of impotence—emotional indifference or undesirousness is, none the less, necessary as its genus. If to be disinterested means anything at all it means an intellectual objectivity in which the subject not only sees things as they are, undistorted by any personal bias, but also loses consciousness of itself, except as perceiver, and focuses its interest exclusively on the object.

If the disinterested man is, by practical exigencies, forced to take an active part in affairs it is with the same attitude of detached contemplation that he watches his own actions, nor is their unforeseen end capable of disappointing him any more than the unforeseen conclusion

of a tragedy will trouble the spectator with wishes that it were otherwise.

Now if we subtract the element of undesirousness or indifference from our disinterested man, leaving him distinguished only by his ability to see the facts of a situation, we have so entirely changed his character as to make our use of the same word farcical. For as applied to him now disinterested means only that in a certain specialized field he refuses to allow his own interests to distort his judgment, and has chosen to know the truth rather than to believe the state of affairs is as he would wish it to be.

Such desire for knowledge is, of course, an excellent thing. But if it is intended merely as a means to an end it no more partakes of disinterestedness than a dictator's desire to know what deprivations people will tolerate and what they will not tolerate, than a hunter's desire to know what hours and places his prey chooses to sleep, or than a banker's desire to know which dishonesty his depositors will and which they will not suspect. Naturally the dictator will rule longer, the hunter will kill more, and the banker will prosper better if they each observe their victims' behaviour instead of assuming that those victims will act as would be most convenient for certain purposes.

But clear sighted as such planning may be, and totally suppressed as all signs of emotion may be while the plans are in execution, and greatly increased as the planner's efficiency may be by his open-eyed coolness, there seems to exist no real resemblance between his state and that of the undesirous "lover of wisdom." Nor would his disappointment at the failure of his plan be any less severe than it would have been had he failed to realize the facts in the original situation. If those facts included a great probability of failure he may be less surprised but he will be none the less dissatisfied.

Of course there is no essential connection between even this merely intellectual disinterestedness and unethical or anti-social conduct. It could as easily be used to render effective a charity campaign as the sale of a patent medicine. But in neither case would it at all resemble the classical ideal, nor would it form a more efficient tool for philanthropic or rational than for selfish and irrational activity. It is, when dissociated from undesirousness, merely an excellent means for accomplishing one's ends whatever they may be, and it helps no whit in deciding those ends or in indicating a way of life. As a technique, while not precisely new, it is important enough to be warmly recommended, but why one should attach to it a label so misleadingly fraught with other connotations and deeper significance is not clear.

This obvious shift in meaning may, however, be occasioned by Lippman's belief that the philosopher's need of such an ethics as disinterestedness provides is now the need of an ever-increasing number, together with his apparent despair of man's ability to attain such a state.

The basis for this despair seems sound enough. Certainly if we use disinterestedness in its traditional sense we can hardly doubt that the tremendous organization of competitive business which Lippman seems to believe will permanently mold our civilization and form its system of values, is absolutely incompatible with the high degree of emotional indifference or undesirousness that must accompany complete intellectual objectivity.

For if by understanding we mean a fully imaginative realization of our opponents desires and needs, and a sense of proportion strong enough to set these fairly beside our own, it would be impossible for any man so equipped to enter—much more to succeed in—that business world which seems to Lippman of paramount im-

portance. In too many of the pieces of work on which Lippman would have him concentrate an intelligent man sees so much pain implied by their achievement that he himself can hardly wish it. No willing, wholehearted or successful participation in this phase of modern life would, normally, be possible for the truly disinterested man.

Obviously, therefore, a wide-spread acceptance of this ideal could not conceivably co-exist with things as they are. And since, as a stoic apologetic, Lippman's philosophy is (albeit unconsciously) concerned with justifying things as they are, he does not present this attitude of disinterestedness as an unattainable ideal but discards it, offering instead a high religion that combines the use of disinterestedness as a technique with a stoic resignation to playing, as well as possible, the parts accidentally assigned us. And, finally, he tempers this resignation with a faint incurious hope that if, by the aid of our new technique, we play our parts very well indeed, we may find there was a destiny which shaped our ends, rough hew them as we would.

It is interesting in this context to compare another disciple's discussion of values with Lippman's. For if Lippman bases his development upon an interpretation of the life of spirit introduced in Santayana's system, Prall concentrates upon the other important element there—pre-rational morality.

That is, he assumes that all things are good or bad only as they please or displease some sentient organism; that intrinsic values are all æsthetic—pleasing in themselves—and that while most moral values are only valuable as means they sometimes, for the morally trained person, become æsthetic as well as moral and are then valuable both as means and as end.

Since Prall refuses to follow Santayana's inconsistency in introducing the alien element of disinterestedness into his system he is forced, in order to escape complete anarchy, to place an increasingly evident reliance on the correctness of expert opinion. Although he attempts to justify this reliance by pointing out that each man actually does prefer those things which his more expert opinion chooses, he takes no cognizance of the temporal factor and ignores the fact that, at the time a man formed his inexpert opinion, he preferred the things it chose—that, in fact, it is not his changing preference but only his unchanging judgment which can ratify as more correct or better his more expert opinion.

When we combine with this appeal to the expert Prall's emphasis on the essential similarity (in important likes and dislikes, normal taste, etc.) of all men we see that he need find no difficulty in evolving standards by which to measure the correctness of any one particular preference and that, although value may be defined as the result of valuing, we will still be able to distinguish between good and bad—between expert and inexpert—valuing.

Prall's regular use of the values of fine art as the type of all values and his many explicit comparisons between the art expert's status in the world of art values and the wise man's status in the general world of values further supports this conclusion and shows that like the orthodox Epicurean he ends by substituting the rigid hierarchy constructed by expert evaluation for the complete anarchy with which he began.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a full analysis of Prall's work in the theory of value see Orlie Pell's "Value Theories and Criticism"—a doctorate dissertation presented to the Department of Philosophy, Columbia University, in 1929.

## CHAPTER VII

### PLURALISM IN HARTMANN'S ETHICS

We must conclude by devoting some time to a consideration of the work of Nicolai Hartmann. There are two reasons for his isolated position in our discussion. The first is that the comprehensiveness of his work—combined with his consciousness of its significance and of the importance of thoroughly re-defining and convincingly exemplifying "realistic ethics"—leads him deliberately to formulate and make explicit all the characteristics which we have found to be more or less incidentally emphasized by our other realists. Unlike the philosophers with whom we have heretofore dealt Hartmann has deliberately set out to build up the formal theory of realistic ethics and not until he has completed this outline does he begin to construct his particular system. The second reason for our devoting this separate chapter to his work is that in his particular system (as distinguished from his general theory of realistic ethics) he anticipates, although from a very different viewpoint, the development of ethical pluralism. It is particularly fitting, therefore, that we conclude with an outline of those parts of Hartmann's work which are, in a sense, relevant to our exposition of that system.

We may begin by re-formulating the propositions to which all ethical realism would subscribe, and by briefly indicating Hartmann's explicit acceptance and development of these:

1. The most fruitful approach to ethical problems is the impersonal rather than the moral; i. e., the treatment of such problems in terms of "value and dis-value" or "good and bad" rather than "right and wrong" "duty" or "conscience."
  - a. There is no emphasis on the obligation to pursue the good. To say, "There is moral value in altruism," is like saying, "There is truth in the law of the excluded middle." The only compulsion comes from intelligent perception. A man who understands ethical values accepts them as a man who understands truth believes it.

"True to the modern interest in everything subjective, the ethical philosophy of the nineteenth century spent itself in an analysis of the moral consciousness and its acts. It was far from troubling itself about the objective contents of moral claims, commandments and values.—In the following investigation I have undertaken to go counter to the long-settled tradition and to take account of the new order of things, in that I have chosen as my central task an analysis of the contents of values."<sup>1</sup>

2. There is a sharp disjunction between facts and values, or between judgments of truth and evaluations. Value is independent of existence as existence is independent of value.

"In itself the real world is neither a value nor in antagonism to value. It is neither wholly as it ought to be nor wholly as it ought not to be. Single values may be completely actualized in it, others altogether non-existent.

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmann's *Ethics*—Vol. I, p. 15.



But in it, on the whole, what ought to be is always in part real and in part unreal.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Good and evil or value and dis-value are parallel terms and have the same metaphysical reality. There is no problem of evil but there is the task of combating it.

“The self-existence of values subsists independently of their own actualization. But this independence does not signify indifference to actuality and non-actuality. We feel this immediately when we mistake one territory for the other, taking the values of things as indifferent to attitudes of minds, the values of dispositions as indifferent to things; but the values of things are not indifferent to things nor are the values of dispositions to dispositions. Within the sphere of the forms to which as vehicles they are connected, values are not indifferent or inert towards what is in antagonism to them; rather do they have quite a peculiar way of denying them. This denial has nothing to do with theoretical negation. It does not at all question the reality of the thing denied; it is more a refusal to recognize it despite its reality, it is in tendency a nullification. Likewise in the affirmation of values that are unreal there is a tendency, a producing, an impulsion towards actualization. As merely ideal forms, values, of course, have no power to cause this impulsion and that nullification to prevail. But it is easy to foresee that, where a real power is seized by it and is committed to this ideal tendency the ideal tendency must be transformed into an actual one—that is, in the moulding of the actual.”<sup>2</sup>

4. Value, although independent of existence, is not

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, p. 233.

independent of logic. All value must be intelligible, that is, must be such that there is no essential impossibility in its being understood by the human reason. Transcendental values are as impossible as is translogical truth.

"In harmony with this is the conviction, which accompanies every genuine judgment of values, that everyone else must judge in the same way and have the same impression. And here also the universality and necessity which betray themselves in such a conviction, are not a psychological factum. For, actually, other persons occasionally feel and judge otherwise. And the one judging knows, or may very well know, of the deviation of the judgment of others from his own.

"But it is here just as it is with mathematical insight. Not everyone is capable of it; not everyone has the eye, the ethical maturity, the spiritual elevation, for seeing the situation as it is. Nevertheless, the universality, necessity and objectivity of the valuational judgment hold good in idea. For this universality does not at all mean that everyone is capable of the insight in question. It only means that whoever is capable of it—that is, whoever has attained the adequate mentality—must necessarily feel and judge thus and not otherwise. This is a quite commonplace truth. Not everyone, for instance, has sense and understanding for the moral value of the noble-minded act matured in quiet meditation, or of consideration for others practiced in a fine way; but everyone who has the understanding for them must judge them as something of value and must respect the personality of the doer."<sup>1</sup>

##### 5. Man's relation to goodness, like his relation to

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, pp. 225, 226.

truth, is one of discovery, not of creation. "X is good" or "x is valuable" is true or false in itself and the correctness of our belief is measured by the truth of the statement. The truth of the statement is quite independent of our belief.

"Thus relatedness to a personal subject has an entirely different significance here. The relatedness of goods to man is not at all a matter of thinking; it is not in man's power, so far as anything is for him a good or an evil, to change matters. It is only in his power within certain limits to strive for that which for him 'is' a good and to avoid that which for him 'is' an evil. His judgment of goods and evils, of course, varies greatly. Not everything which 'is' good or evil for everyone is felt by everyone to be good or evil. But that evidently is only a matter as to the acuteness or dullness of the sense of values. It does not touch the fact that one thing 'is good for him' and that another is 'bad for him.' <sup>1</sup>

"There is achieved a new and deeper metaphysical definition of man. He is the 'measure of things' (according to Protagoras), their standard of value. He is the one who evaluates. We must not misunderstand this in the sense of any kind of valuational subjectivism. Man's 'valuing' is not an conferring of values. He does not give them, they are given to him, whether they be ideal or actualized values. But they exist, in the first place, insofar as they present themselves realized in actuality, 'for him' as the one who feels and understands them; and secondly, the whole class of goods—situations is relative to him. Goods are not valuable in themselves, but 'for him.' And in this sense we must, of course, speak of a kind of conferring of value: by means of himself, as

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, p. 207.

the point of reference, an appraisal of what in itself is neutral. The appraisal must be mediated 'through him.' " <sup>1</sup>

But Hartmann's ethics, while avowedly and characteristically realistic, differs very materially from the tradition of ethical realism.

For that tradition is, on the whole, one of emphatic monism. And Hartmann's equally emphatic pluralism has not been adequately emphasized even by the glowing terms in which reviewers describe his detailed and vivid treatment of satisfyingly specific material. For while monism does popularly imply a formal approach, yet Plato's concrete ethics is as essentially monistic as is Kant's abstract system. Nor does even Santayana's variegated system fail to reduce all goods to two <sup>2</sup> common principles of goodness.

But as we have seen this is not necessarily implied by realism in ethics. For alluring as the analogy between an ethical and a deductive mathematical system is, it need not be less plausible for being imperfect. The work of the ethical philosopher is perhaps more fruitfully compared with that of the art critic than with that of the mathematician. And the more expert an art critic is the more clearly he realizes that only by a metaphor can the principles of beauty or excellence in a picture be applied to a symphony or a play. Hartmann recognizes this tendency to transform a metaphorical into a literal description and comments upon it immediately before developing his own view of the plurality of values. He says, in part, "Many types of philosophical ethics, how-

<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> (One, if we ignore its inadvertent inconsistency)

ever, have committed this mistake of seeing the relation of valuational rank in the material relation of a subsumption. Here belong all the theories which search for an ultimate fundamental value from which all lower ones can be traced. A logical relation of deduction unintentionally haunts such a tracing; we even surrender to the belief that in this way a system of ethical values can be derived. But even in this, we are yearning for an ultimate oneness of value.—Despite all the failures of such a construction, the tendency to be misled by the analogy to a system of concepts continues unabated. Philosophy seems unable to escape from casting the valuational system (so far as it attains thereto) into the form of a system of valuational concepts. The latter kind of a system cannot be changed. For this reason, that prejudice can never be successfully coped with by mere criticism, but only by the introduction of a positive outlook, otherwise conditioned. Now such an outlook, as already said, cannot be arbitrarily set up, but must be derived from progressive analysis of value itself.<sup>1</sup>

And fortunately the argument for the possibility of pluralism in a realistic system of ethics is no longer a hypothetical one since Hartmann has here presented us with such a "progressive analysis" of the nature of value, based upon the analyses of many different and independent values.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. 11, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Ross, whom we have not included in the body of this paper because his attitude on the questions which concerned us seems adequately represented by Laird and Moore, gives us some less developed but as unmistakable intimations of a similar pluralism in his ethical theory.

In his book on *The Right and The Good* Ross says:

"We have rejected the simple view that there is any angle notion co-extensive with good and it looks as if we ought also to reject the simple view that there is a single notion coextensive with right.

"Now I agree that goodness is a consequential attribute; that anything that is good must be good either by virtue of its whole nature apart from

He begins this work by asserting that the world of values is far wider than is assumed by most modern moralists. In his introduction to the first volume he says, "He who stolidly passes by men and their fates, he whom the staggering does not stagger nor the inspiring inspire, for him life is in vain, he has no part in it. The world must be meaningless and life senseless to one who has no capacity to perceive life's relationships, the inexhaustible significance of persons and situations, of correlations and events.—His poverty amidst abundance is due to his own failure to appreciate life. Hence for the moral nature of man there is, besides the narrow actuality of action, a second requirement: to participate in the fullness of life, to be receptive of the significant, to lie open to whatever has meaning and value.—Every ethics of duty and of the Ought alone, all purely imperative morals, commits this blunder—the blunder of overlooking the fullness of life."<sup>1</sup>

Although he then announces that his concern for the present is chiefly with that narrow part of the field recognized by moralists, Hartmann points out that these conventionally emphasized values would be meaningless if one did not first realize the importance of other less commonly accepted ones. In Volume II he begins his treatment of moral values by clarifying his position as to the reality and importance of these non-moral "situational" values or goods. He says "So much, however, is easily seen, that not all values which are ethically relevant, whether in the sense of obligation or participation, are

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its goodness or by virtue of something in its nature other than its goodness.—But I cannot agree that the presumption is that there is any *one* characteristic by virtue of which all the things that are good are good. If conscientiousness and benevolence, for instance, are both good, it is just as likely, initially that conscientiousness is good because it is conscientious and benevolence is good because it is benevolent." p. 79.

<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, p. 35.

on that account moral values. The character of man is related to a multitude of values which are not moral in their nature. Moral conduct is always conduct towards persons, but never except in connection with other kinds of values and counter-values. From this point of view there was some reason for including, as the ancients did, the theory of goods under ethics.—In fact, wherein would an honest man be superior to a thief if the things purloined were not somehow of value?—Honesty, then, if it is a moral value, necessarily presupposes the positive worth of material goods. It is inherently dependent upon the latter.”<sup>1</sup>

He is also careful to guard against the misinterpretation that these goods or “situational values” are in any way to be considered as dependent upon and, therefore, as deriving their value from, those higher values for which they are necessary. The value of property is not related to that of honesty as the value of eating is to that of life. In the latter case the existence of food is necessary to make possible the existence (and therefore the actualized value) of life, but the value of food is irrelevant. Food, therefore, may properly be considered as possessing only utility and no independent value—as being good only in so far as it leads to life. But the value rather than the existence of property is necessary to make meaningful the value of honesty, and so property, although a good of a low order *is* independently good even when not associated with honesty. After developing this exposition<sup>2</sup> Hartmann concludes, “\* \* \* all grades of values, genuine in their own right, possess their peculiar autonomy, which can be diminished by no kind of dependence upon anything above. The whole meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, pp. 26, 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, p. 29.

of the realm of values, so far as it is a world of ideal self-maintaining entities, stands or falls with this foundation-principle. But especially is it the spiritual values, even down to their ultimate details, which by their constitution reveal this autonomy. What is beautiful is beautiful for its own sake; what is comical is comical in itself; what is noble or lovable is noble or lovable intrinsically. All reference back to something else for the sake of which it is what it is is fantastic speculation."

That the higher values are in a sense dependent upon the lower values does not detract from their complete autonomy, for it is only their actualized existence, not their significance, which is so dependent. There is a new quality which emerges when the raw material of property values is used in creating the moral value of honesty and this quality is altogether different from (and, according to Hartmann, incomparably greater than) the quality of the situational value.

We now have, as the basis of our system, not only two altogether distinct classes of values, but a real plurality of values in each class. Moreover this plurality cannot be arranged in any one linear series as the field of value is at least two-dimensional and there are many goods—and even many moral values—which rank equally and differ only in their distinctive nature, not in height or strength or general importance.<sup>1</sup>

Although the real plurality and frequent conflict of equal values holds good in both classes, Hartmann is, in his present work, concerned only with the class of dispositional or moral values (which he characterizes as incomparably higher). We may therefore assume, as he

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmann's first complete exposition of this thesis is given in the third chapter of the second volume which he calls "The Gradation of Values."



seems to, a close parallel in the organization of the two classes and keep that in mind while concentrating upon his deliberate description of the higher one.

He begins a chapter entitled, "The Problem of the Supreme Value," by emphasizing this necessary plurality and even contradiction within the field of moral values, and points out that the unity which an ethics must have will be the result of its systematic form and not of a simple root principle or single major premise. "It becomes a task for ethics to resolve such contradictions (as those of the historical relativity of morals and even of different current moralities)—so far as they may be resolved—that is, so far as they are not due to an original antimony in values themselves. So far as the latter is the case, ethics must not attempt synthesis; but it cannot disregard the demand for a unified survey. This belongs to its very nature. It must also select its point of view according to the phenomena, not the phenomena according to its point of view, even at the risk of comprehensibility. . . . Hence it appears that in its principles ethics must always allow for an incurable pluralism as regards contents. But then not only does its own unity become very questionable, but also that of practical guidance in human life. Could it lie in the nature of ethics to prove that to be illusory which one rightly expects of it; the unity of the moral claim?<sup>1</sup> . . . For if one looks at the final discernable elements of value, one becomes easily convinced, that a unifying value lying beyond them can neither be seen nor inferred from them, but that the connection of these valational groups is conceivable and evident. Unity of system then might still be existent. Unity of system is plainly in nowise dependent upon the focal unity, the one value, that was sought."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, p. 65

<sup>2</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, p. 68.

After many illuminating illustrations of different and often conflicting values such as justice and love, neighbor love and creative spirit, etc., and of such essentially antagonistic and contradictory values as those of purity and maturity, Hartmann concludes with an interesting emphasis on the tremendous importance of personal preference or the personal ethos which alone can decide in each particular case between the conflicting claims of many equally important values. He reiterates, "Now here it is left to the person himself to make a decision from case to case. And this is the point at which the conduct of the particular individual becomes differentiated axiologically, and indeed not simply in regard to preference for the higher or lower value, that is, not merely from the general point of view of good and bad, but according to a far greater variety of possibilities in axiological distinction. Under some circumstances, in one and the same complex situation, innumerable kinds of conduct and of resolution are possible, according to which of the values touched upon is taken as fixing the standard. Every human ethos brings with it preferential trends in specific valuational directions; every ethos neglects other values which are also at stake. And still in its way each one is right—and not only subjectively; for at any given time no one can do justice to all the values concerned,—it cannot be asserted that the individual ethos is nothing but a failure to reflect the universal order of rank. Personality would then not be a value, but a disvalue.—If morality consists of nothing else than the carrying out of one or a few general laws, then personal individuality which attempts anything beyond is utterly immoral. The case is different, if there exists a real realm of values in the overwhelming variety of which the order of height is only one of many dimensions. Here there is room for an

order of preference with its variety according to one's liking, together with the order of rank in the scale of values."<sup>1</sup>

This emphasis upon the importance of personal preference as well as the correlated emphasis upon the frequent and unavoidable conflict of value with value rather than of value with dis-value is repeated in many other striking passages,<sup>2</sup> but there is no point in multiplying instances when almost the entire second volume consists of an analysis of various concrete moral values and a discussion of their necessary and accidental contradictions.

The insight and power of this section of the work makes one eager for a companion volume on situational values. In default of such a work one can only guess at the manner of analysis which Hartmann would consider best suited to a discussion of "goods." While in many respects—particularly in its attitude toward the relation of the field of moral values and the field of goods<sup>3</sup> our ethical pluralism differs seriously from Hartmann's view, it might, nevertheless, be considered the beginning of an attempt at such an analysis of "goods."

Before concluding we must touch upon one more important element of Hartmann's system which, as we have seen in Chapter IV, becomes even more important in the analysis of goods. That is the essential part expert evaluation plays in his "Ethics."

For while most ethical realists mention the possibility of an ethical blindness akin to physical blindness or deafness—they are, indeed, forced to introduce some such possibility to explain differences in ethical opinion—they

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics—Vol. II, pp. 351, 352.

<sup>2</sup> Ethics—Vol. I, pp. 299, 300, 301.

<sup>3</sup> (In which field are included moral values as seen from the viewpoint of the object to whom they are situational values or goods.)

have for the most part been content with a somewhat cursory mention and have in general assumed that normal appreciation of goodness also resembled the normal seeing of red or hearing of a simple note. Most concrete differences in ethical opinion they have explained by assuming errors in causal judgment which would lead men who desired the same ends to call different means good.

And so long as we cling to a monistic theory of value this view is, perhaps, most plausible. There seems little reason to doubt that if all good things had a single quality in common almost everyone would recognize it and only the practical problem introduced by a border line case or by an extremely complicated one would, perhaps, call for an expert decision. With such a monistic ethics we are almost compelled to believe that real goodness is no more difficult to recognize than any other simple quality. Everyone, or at least every normal person, would know goodness when he met it just as he would know yellow when he saw it. There would be no need to introduce any discussion of the nature of different good things—or goods.

But if we assume as many goodnesses as there are different sorts of good things we realize that this simple almost sensory recognition of each single good is no longer an adequate hypothesis.

Hartmann, stressing the fundamentally different nature of different goods which is implied by the real plurality of values, not only realizes the need of a peculiar sensitivity and often of a special training to enable one to recognize any particular sort of value, but also realizes the fact that the phrase "sense of value" is meaningless unless it refers to a sense which can grasp structure and relation—which is intellectual rather than sensory in its nature. He emphasizes the importance of the ethical

expert—the essential part the expert plays in the intuition of values—in such passages as “Ethical man is in everything the opposite of the precipitate and apathetic man. He is the seer of values, he is sapiens in the original sense of the word: the “taster.”<sup>1</sup>

If the expert is so important in the field of moral values we may rightly expect him to play a still larger part in a discussion of goods. For while every man has within him some consciousness (even if only through antagonism) of almost all the moral values, many men have never even come into contact with such specialized situational values as good music or good conversation. And while, from the nature of the subject-matter, there is little formal training beyond constant exercise of innate capacity or sensitivity which would enable a man to appreciate moral values, there is an immense body of formal training possible and necessary for the appreciation of most situational goods. In this Socrates' original contention that the average citizen would recognize a good or just decision where he would not recognize a good or beautiful tapestry is not altogether misleading. And his further argument that it is impossible to teach a man to be good without teaching him to be good in something, or to help a man be better without helping him to be a better something aptly concludes our discussion of realistic pluralism. For when Protagoras asserted, “Young man, if you associate with me, on the first day you will return home a better man than you came and better on the second day than on the first and better every day than you were the day before,” Socrates said, “Protagoras, I do not at all wonder at hearing you say this; even at your age, and with all your wisdom, if any one were to teach you what you did

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<sup>1</sup> *Ethics*—Vol. I, p. 45.

not know before you would become better no doubt; but suppose that Hippocrates instead of desiring your acquaintance went to Orthagoras the Theban and heard him say the same thing and asked him, 'In what shall I become better day by day?' He would reply, 'In flute playing.' Now I want you to make the same answer to this young man and to me who am asking questions on his account. When you say that on the first day on which he associates with you he will return home a better man, and on every day he will grow in like manner—in *what*, Protagoras, *will he be better?*"

## VITA

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